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Performing America: Walt Whitman, Erasure,
and the Politics of Textual Inclusion

by

Carey R. Voeller

B.A. Portland State University, 2000

presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements

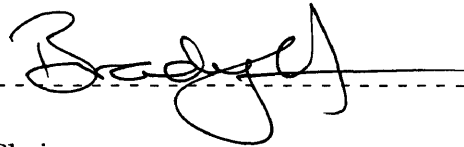
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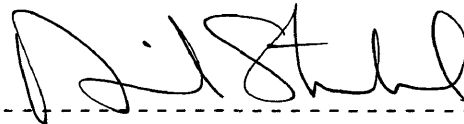
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Performing America: Walt Whitman, Erasure, and the Politics of Textual Inclusion

Director: Brady Harrison



Walt Whitman's poems and prose require reading through the lens of nineteenth-century expansionism and imperialism. In his texts, the poet, less concerned with equally celebrating the world's peoples, instead focuses on imagining a progressive, strong, dominant Euro-America. Whitman's poems, "From Far Dakota's Cañons," "Osceola," "Song of the Redwood-Tree," and "Salut au Monde!" represent American Indians and non-European "others" as inferior and incapable of assimilation into a progressive United States. The poet's textual representation of the "other," a process we can call textual inclusion, takes shape in three primary forms: outright imperialism, elegiac sentiment and naturalization, and global subordination. His inclusion of the "other," however, remains far from innocent or reverent when these forms eventually, either implicitly or explicitly, insist on the erasure and exclusion of the "other" from the vision of an ideal America. Scholars and historians have long credited Whitman with "celebrating" those outside of the Euro-American identity; yet, his celebration cannot exist without the eventual exclusion of the "other" from his pages. Each form of exclusion and erasure, in Whitman's poems, suggests a direct parallel with historical American contexts of "interior" American Indian Diaspora and extinction, as well as economic and technological penetration and expansion abroad.

In the poems, the "other" for Whitman serves as a non-European body separate from the Euro-American identity. Unlike the non-European "other," Whitman's Euro-American "other" in *Democratic Vistas* works as a degenerated extension of the ideal Self; this fallen Self, in Whitman's view, needs to rise to his visionary standards. The Euro-American "other" thus proves subordinate to Whitman's Ideal, much as does the non-European in "Salut au Monde!" In the poet's famous prose piece, the textual inclusion works slightly differently in its form of critique; nonetheless, we still see his underlying fascination with exclusion and erasure. The important link between the poems and prose lies in the idea that the vision of empire building concurrently depends on a space of nothingness, a space cleared through imperialism, naturalization, and subordination.

Acknowledgements

This study would have not been possible without the constant involvement and support from my committee. Brady Harrison sat as chairman of my project, and was a tremendous help in shaping my initial mess of ideas into a logical formula; in addition, he pushed me to develop my argument to the next level. Brady is a mentor and inspiration as well as a true friend, and I am greatly indebted to him. Robert Baker, my second committee member, went above and beyond the call of duty in reading my drafts many, many times. I am grateful for the tireless work he put into my project, as well as for his criticism and friendship. Michael Mayer, my third committee member, listened to my project idea with interest, and cheerfully agreed to come on board somewhat late in the game. Katie Kane's advice, support, and comments over the "Salut au Monde!" chapter have been an enormous help. David Moore's thoughts and ideas on Whitman are what first spurred me to begin thinking of him in this light. My "little" brother Nathan has my undying love and respect. And finally, my father, Ardell, and my mother, Sydel, showed me, from a very young age, the importance of reading and thinking. My family has always believed in me--even when I haven't believed in myself. This study is dedicated to them.

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Introduction

This study explores how Walt Whitman textually excludes and erases both non-European and Euro-American “others” in his poetic and prosaic quest for a united, democratic, and progressive America. Whitman’s all-inclusive texts that deal with “others”--both inside and outside the United States--employ a tactic we can call “textual inclusion.” I will focus primarily on the poet’s representation of non-European “others”; Whitman’s textual inclusion eventually--and always--reveals representations of the non-European “other’s” racial, evolutionary, technological and economic inferiority. These inclusive textual representations are constructed and envisioned through Whitman’s American, Eurocentric mind, one grounded in the historical nineteenth-century contexts of Manifest

Destiny, American expansionism, and progression. Because of its portrayal of deficiency, inferiority, and inability, textual inclusion therefore results in the exclusion and erasure of the non-European “other.” As the poet’s main priority is the progression of the Euro-American, he must erase non-European “others” from his pages in order to provide a textual space for the progressive, democratic American to fill. Ultimately, Whitman’s poems and prose attempt to construct a rhetoric of American identity. He spends years shaping *Leaves of Grass* into a textual representation of a perfect, united, utopian America. When he, later in life, sees the Euro-American “result” of his democratic textual performance, the nineteenth-century American in turn becomes Whitman’s target of exclusion and subordination.

An analysis of Whitman and erasure proves necessary, for his texts ultimately reveal an exclusion of peoples both outside and inside the ideal, Eurocentric Body. This study also suggests that Whitman was a direct participant in constructing and furthering American identity and progression; the Jeffersonian ideals he adhered to, obviously, ran hand in hand with U.S. expansion and Manifest Destiny. The American nineteenth-century serves as a particularly important period in history to reevaluate the dominant works and voices that attempted to create an emerging form, shape, and future of the young country. The texts of Emerson, Thoreau, Poe, Melville, and Whitman are not aesthetic creations of art which are merely “art for art’s sake”--nineteenth-century artistic views argued by Walter Pater and Oscar Wilde. Rather, these works serve as products geared toward and reflective of a growing American empire: one that, through technology, expansion, economic capability, scientific and Darwinian evolution, often legitimizes and naturalizes the inferiority, and at times, overall disappearance of people both inside and outside of an idealized--but sometimes very narrow and often ambiguous--Euro-American identity.

Beginning with Leadie Clark's *Walt Whitman's Concept of the American Common Man* (1955), numerous scholars have discussed Whitman's poems and prose in relation to U.S. expansionism. Walter Grünzweig, Jerome Loving, Ed Folsom, Maurice Kenny, Simon Ortiz, Malini Schueller, and David Moore--among others--have raised important questions concerning Whitman, imperialism, racial identity, and American growth. It is crucial to thus further the conversation, to discuss the poet's role as a textual expansionist through his representations of "others"--both within and beyond America's borders. There has been much scholarship during the twentieth century dealing with Whitman's love for humanity, about his ability to poetically transcend geographic boundaries and racial, ethnic differences to see equality and worth in all people. However, his expanding inclusiveness nevertheless contains expanding questions of exactly who and what fits into the sometimes problematic definition of a progressive American identity. If we are to see Whitman as the poet and voice of the American nineteenth-century, whose intention is to provide a textual model of an Ideal America and people, we cannot avoid calling into question how his simultaneous biases and racial, technological, and evolutionary theories of non-European "others" help define and give space to a strong, progressive America--while they lessen and exclude "others" from this Ideal identity. It is important to recognize that, as scholars such as Wai-chee Dimock and Malini Schueller have shown with Melville, Emerson and other key literary figures, Whitman's texts of "equality" and unity fall into the nineteenth-century American historical contexts of building both the nation and the American identity.

Whitman's enormously inclusive vision, on some levels, represents the realistic pluralism and cosmopolitanism required to live and function in a truly democratic existence. The vision also proved necessary as the United States, Europe, and the rest of the nineteenth-century world grew more quickly interconnected by economic, technological,

and scientific advancement and growth. While the poet appears romantic and idealistic in his texts, his actual pragmatic intentions are to set America on a pedestal *above* the world. In order to move closer toward a utopian, idealistic American society, Whitman must simultaneously draw boundaries, deeming most non-Europeans as unfit or incapable of participating in the journey. His poetic and prosaic universal vision works as a paradox; it may transcend borders and oceans to gaze upon and speak about “all,” but the inescapable turn back to the Euro-American and America largely results in racist and imperialist rhetoric; Whitman’s rhetoric often reflects and furthers the views and actions of the growing American empire during the nineteenth-century.

Language works as the poet’s particular contribution to the advancement of the American society in which he lives; for example, he can further the building of empire without leading an army in the conquest of Mexico. As a young man, Whitman worked as a reporter for the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*; many of his articles in the 1840s praised the efforts of General Zachary Taylor, during the Mexican-American War, to claim Mexico as territory. His language may even *drive* the progression, because the language contains all the best, most progressive elements of America. In a May 11, 1846 article for the *Eagle*, Whitman argues, “Mexico must be thoroughly chastised! [. . .] Mexico [. . .] is an enemy deserving a vigorous ‘lesson’ [. . .] Let our arms now be carried with a spirit which shall teach the world that [. . .] America knows how to crush, as well as how to expand!” (*Collected* 358-359). As the poet grew older and began concentrating more on writing poems than journalism, his national rhetoric somewhat softened. However, until his death in 1892, his writings suggest that Whitman envisioned a perfect and progressive America; language, whether implicit or explicit, served as his chief tool to aid in the construction.

The perfect shaping of an ideal United States--through language--works through the strategy of textual inclusion. Before moving into a synopsis of how textual inclusion operates within Whitman's poems and prose, it is first necessary to briefly attempt to define basic principles of textual inclusion itself. Textual inclusion applies in Whitman's representations of non-European "others," as well as in his portrayals of Euro-Americans. In regard to the non-European "other," textual inclusion, at a first glance, might result in the poet's reputation as all-loving and all-accepting; it allows him to appear as the spokesperson for the entire world. The ability of Whitman to step outside his Euro-American body and country to freely textually represent non-Europeans serves as the basic level of textual inclusion. For instance, if he writes a poem about a Native American, then that particular Native American--through Whitman as creator and representative--has space and a place in the poem, either as a minor or major element. Whitman might represent how the Indian lives and works; he might depict hardships that befall the Indian. On one hand, any poet or fiction writer employs the same tactics, when creating certain textual characters. We might stop here and suggest that Whitman's depiction of non-Europeans--the inclusion of these peoples in the space of his texts--*does* prove him to be a man able to embrace racial and ethnic differences. We might consider that textual inclusion of "others" casts him *beyond* the role of a U.S. expansionist. If we limit ourselves to these considerations, then textual inclusion has a relatively harmless function. Yet, for Whitman, textually including--to represent and to speak about the "other"--means to eventually, implicitly or explicitly, insist on inferiority and incapability, and thus means erasure and exclusion.

As Whitman cannot escape his historical context, an assertion that Dimock rightly argues in the case of Melville, Whitman's textual inclusion (representation) of non-

European “others” contains two problematic functions--functions that center him as a proponent furthering American expansion. I mentioned earlier that Whitman’s language contains all the best elements of America; it is a linguistic idealization carefully constructed. In relation to this, Whitman meticulously labors in his rhetorical representation of “others.” The end product of a textually included non-European reflects a planned formation of the “other”; one may at first assume that Whitman pays poetic or prosaic homage to the “other” by both allowing him or her a place in the text, and by reverently representing his or her day-to-day life and activity. The first problem arises, however, because the “other’s” textual inclusion works as a twisted or distorted representation--it is, in a sense, biased. Textual inclusion of non-Europeans does not realistically benefit them; in its biased function, the non-Europeans’ lives, habits, and traits are altered to instead show their racial, evolutionary, and technological inability to contribute to a progressive America; the manipulation serves as a lessening, and sometimes even an erasure of the “other.” Simultaneously, the distortion of non-Europeans thus strengthens and provides further vitality and capability for the Euro-American. For Whitman, Textual inclusion seemingly cannot exist without these biased distortions. Another lesser, but related function of textual inclusion is to depict the “other” as a living embodiment of Western achievement and technology. This biased purpose of Western achievement--through the inclusion--helps reassure and reassert America’s (and the West’s) potential to globally expand, while at the same time showing the vast gap between America and the “other,” in terms of *who embodies* the capability of the technological and expansionistic achievements.

The second major problematic function in textual inclusion of non-European “others” is that the inclusion serves a temporary moment. This idea in particular applies to Whitman’s poems that deal with the American Indian. Again, Whitman’s ability to discuss a

certain Native American or tribe creates the illusion of him as an all-loving and accepting spokesperson for the country's indigenous peoples. Yet, in these poems, the "necessity" of exclusion works just below the textual inclusion of the Indian; quite plainly, Native textual inclusion and representation *always lead* to exclusion--both from the poem and from the American lands which they inhabit. In Whitman's Native poems lies his rhetoric of Darwinian theory. This emerging scientific force legitimizes and naturalizes the Native disappearance, and concurrently makes the shift from inclusion-to-exclusion easier. Hence, the temporary qualities of textual inclusion. The inclusion-to-exclusion tactics are at times structurally gradual; yet this idea works as another paradox: Whitman chooses to represent, to textually include a Native body and voice, only to simultaneously depict the teleological move toward the Native disappearance. Whitman's textual representation and inclusion of Native Americans cannot be viewed as reverent, for whether gradual or immediate, his inclusion of the Native is done in order to insist upon the Native disappearance from the expanding, progressive America. With these principles established, we can move into more specificity in how textual inclusion works with each of Whitman's selected poems and prose.

My first chapter deals with "From Far Dakota's Cañons." The poem was originally entitled "A Death Sonnet for Custer," and appeared in the *New York Tribune* in July of 1876. It was first included in the 1876 edition of *Leaves of Grass*, and it took its current title in the 1881 edition (*Leaves* 483). The poem immortalizes General George Custer, who died in battle with the Sioux at the banks of the Little Big Horn in June of 1876. Textual inclusion, in the poems, adapts three primary forms. This poem shows Whitman constructing outright imperialist propaganda. He does so by dehistoricizing the events surrounding Custer and the Sioux and by mythologizing the "brave" Cavalry leader. Both

dehistoricization and mythicization serve as two common textual tactics in constructing imperialist propaganda. Whitman at first mainly concentrates on textually *including* Custer as the heroic, noble, and ruthless ideal of American expansionism. However, the inclusive spotlight on Custer cannot exist without the simultaneous textual inclusion representing the slaughter of the Sioux--which the reader "sees" and "hears" at the poem's beginning. There is indeed textual inclusion of the Sioux, but the biased inclusion instantly (and inaccurately) signifies total decimation of the tribe. Chapter one argues that the textual space needed to effectively martyrize Custer depends largely on a simultaneous textual representation of the fallen, dead Sioux. If Whitman were to give the Sioux more equal, humane, and historically accurate space in the poem, the attention on the Sioux would lessen the imperial rhetoric of Custer's "brave" accomplishments in the West. The death of the Sioux hangs throughout the entire poem; when the poet *does* recreate the actions of the Sioux, the warriors are depicted as savage, tricky, and cunning, mercilessly waiting to slaughter the unsuspecting Cavalry. Again, through dehistoricization and distortion, Whitman's textual inclusion of the Sioux is one of barbarity and ruthlessness. This bias lessens the Sioux as warriors defending the Black Hills from the U.S. government's intrusion, while at the same time strengthening and privileging the dominant Euro-American concern of attaining yet more land.

Chapter two examines Whitman's poetic representation in "Osceola" and "Song of the Redwood-Tree." "Osceola" was first published in *Munson's Illustrated World* in April 1890, two years before Whitman's death (*Leaves* 550). "Osceola" serves as the first poem in my discussion that applies the inclusion-to-exclusion tactic. In the text, Osceola, the Seminole Indian chief, prepares to die after living his last years in a jail cell; here lies one of the examples where textual inclusion is temporary at best. The poet's imperialist rhetoric works less explicitly in "Osceola"; however, although in subtler fashion, he still carefully

dehistoricizes--through inaccurate second-hand information--the circumstances surrounding Osceola's capture and death. As the textual inclusion and representation of Osceola constructs the chief at the moment of death, Whitman "softens" and lessens the poetic and historical space that Osceola will create by interjecting a sort of elegiac sentimentality--the second form of textual inclusion. Elegiac sentimentality, however, eventually legitimizes the Native American disappearance. This sentimentality, I will argue, works as a "reverent" distraction that turns the reader away from the actuality of Native death. At the same time, because textual inclusion is always biased in its depiction, sentimentality also justifies, perhaps naturalizes, the immanence of the Native disappearance across the country. Through the elegiac poem that textually includes Osceola at the onset of death, Whitman can create a sympathetic moment that pays homage to a dying race. Yet, a close reading of "Osceola" still hints--through the air of sentimentality--at the underlying Darwinian "necessity" of the weaker-element's role of clearing a space for the stronger. The sympathy and sentimentality, like Osceola, proves temporary; it is the "least" that Whitman can do as a poet for the people--while still simultaneously adhering to the naturalization of Darwinian process, a process that inevitably erases and excludes both the sentiment and Osceola.

The latter part of chapter two discusses "Song of the Redwood-Tree." Whitman wrote the poem in the autumn of 1873. *Harper's Magazine* paid him \$100 for the poem, and they published it the following February. After its publication in *Harper's*, the poem appeared in the "Centennial Songs" of the 1876 publication of *Two Rivulets*. "Song of the Redwood-Tree" finally made its debut in the 1881 edition of *Leaves of Grass*, and remained almost entirely unchanged in the latter subsequent editions (*Leaves* 206). In this poem, as in "Osceola," the imperialist rhetoric again visibly softens by the elegiac-like portrayal of the tree--a character and voice analogous to the disappearing Indian. However, in clearer and

more obvious rhetoric than in “Osceola,” the poet’s expansionist motifs take on the naturalized legitimization of Native disappearance and exclusion. Hertha Wong notes that “Whitman consciously applies ‘the Evolution theory’ throughout his work, and it is fitting that he should do so since it does not discriminate, but encompasses all” (30). While Wong makes many valid points, her statement is contestable. In much of Whitman’s work, but especially in “Song of the Redwood-Tree,” Darwinian implications are used to justify and naturalize exclusion of the weaker element or “body.”

The poet was a great admirer of Darwin, and Wong notes that “by the 1870s he clearly associates Darwin with the theory of evolution” (28). It only seems appropriate that Whitman, as a supporter of American strength, expansion, and dominance, would subscribe to theories that suggest that weaker elements must submit to stronger and more capable ones. In a short essay entitled “Darwinism-(Then Furthermore),” which appeared in print in *Two Rivulets* (1876), he notes that the world must be careful to not let Darwinism “dominate every thing else”; it must “take its place as a segment of the circle, the cluster” (*Complete* 1060). While cautioning against putting too much faith into any scientific speculation, Whitman still argues the importance of Darwinian theory. He states, “the world of erudition, both moral and physical, cannot but be eventually better’d and broaden’d in its speculations, from the advent of Darwinism” (1060). I would argue that “Song of the Redwood-Tree” reflects Whitman’s increasing interest in the theory of evolution that will legitimize the gradual disappearance of weaker elements in the world.

Whitman seems to forget about his warning in “Song of the Redwood-Tree.” At the outset of the poem, he suggests, through temporary textual representation and inclusion of a dying tree’s lament, that actual exclusion is inevitable and necessary. There appears no position to debate, due to the naturalization of Darwinian evolution. Because he can rely

on a scientific force--one greater than him--to erase the option of argument, he has free rein in "Song of the Redwood-Tree" to push his American expansionist rhetoric to the California seashore. The biased purpose--even cloaked in elegiac sympathy--once again works to push forward and expand the Euro-American interest.

Chapter three analyzes "Salut au Monde!" as the climax of Whitman's poetic expansionist vision; he has moved from America's borders to view the entire world as the next stage in American domination. In the edition from 1856, Whitman originally entitles the piece "Poem of Salutation"; the poem took its present title in the third 1860 edition (*Leaves* 137). The poem--although vast in its evocation of the entire world--also works as perhaps the most subtle expression of the poet's Euro-American rhetoric; here we see Whitman in a friendly moment, praising the vast stretch of global diversity and difference before him. This poetic celebration may at first appear harmless, perhaps again even casting Whitman as the worldwide spokesperson. Yet, while all the selected poems are ultimately constructed and envisioned through the Euro-American mind, "Salut au Monde!" signifies the moment where this centered privileging is the most apparent. Whitman's imperialist and expansionist rhetoric works in the third form of textual inclusion--the idea of a globalized subordination. Through textual representation and inclusion of the world's peoples--both of European and non-European origin--Whitman creates racial, evolutionary, capitalistic, and technological hierarchies. As the world's different countries and peoples are "celebrated," they are simultaneously placed at lower levels of accomplishment and progression than those of the West, more specifically, America. America always rests at the top of the hierarchy, perhaps even *above* it, and the "other" countries and peoples are thus positioned below. In "Salut au Monde!" the textual inclusion of the world's peoples works again as biased; the peoples of the Middle East and Africa are portrayed as inferior elements

that cling to lifestyles and habits of the past. In relation, they are also represented as atavistic or undeveloped; the degenerate, incomplete qualities qualify the “other” as incapable, from an evolutionary viewpoint, of joining a progressive, “civilized” Euro-American body. In still different moments of the poem, the textually included peoples in Asia and Africa are represented to show how they, as technological and economical targets, inevitably serve as living examples of America’s achievement. The global subordination proves at times difficult to decipher, due to the poet’s seemingly endless voice of textually inclusive celebration; nevertheless, as the poem progresses, the biased purpose in the textual inclusion becomes more apparent.

Whitman’s central purpose in “Salut au Monde!” is to set up the world’s stage, “seeing” and “hearing” the bodies, so that the Western and American reader can then “visually” scrutinize the “other.” It is his textual inclusion of the world’s peoples that concurrently relays their subordination to America; the hierarchies he constructs also translate into various rungs of separation and exclusion. If Whitman’s America is to serve as the global leader at the forefront, the other countries and peoples cannot also have a place as progressive leaders; these countries may have a *part* on the world’s stage, but it is a part that always follows *behind* the progressive America.

Finally, my last chapter covers Whitman’s essay *Democratic Vistas*, which was written between 1867-1870. The essay at first consisted of three separate essays, and they were published together under the present title in 1871 (Loving 331). The poems prepare us to read Whitman’s famous essay, for we see many of his poetic tactics now used in a text that deals with the “status” of the Euro-American. *Democratic Vistas* works differently in its representations than do the poems. The poems point out a physical split between the Euro-American Self and the non-European or European “other,” either through racial

difference or progressive incapability. The “other” in the essay works as the failed--in Whitman’s opinion--Euro-American; his object of critique in a sense becomes the “other,” because it is split from and subordinate to the envisioned, Ideal Self. However, the “other” simultaneously still remains as a lesser extension of the Self; hence the split, and not the complete severance that we see conducted in the poems.

Whitman cannot completely evoke the split we see in the poems, for he, as a Euro-American, obviously belongs to the body of his critique. At the same time, if he were to apply the final and actual exclusion to the Euro-American, his projected, ideal vision would ultimately cease to exist. His purpose in the essay is to critique contemporary America in the period after the Civil War; his realistic intentions are to bring the “fallen” Euro-American back up to the ideal standards he has so long projected in his poems. Yet, I will argue that Whitman’s textual moves in the essay also hint at an underlying impulse to exclude and erase the “fallen” Euro-American, in attempt to reestablish the Ideal Euro-American. We cannot look at Whitman’s textual performance in the same manner as the poems dealing with the American Indians, for the essay does not reflect actual, historical Native exclusion and erasure. However, the key *textual* similarity between the poems and prose, ultimately, is that--whether implicitly or explicitly--erasure and exclusion keeps Whitman’s utopian vision on the horizon. The textual construction of building the nation always depends on a space of absence in order *to* build; this absence emerges from the exclusion and erasure of those Whitman deems incapable of representing his Ideal model.

Chapter One

“From Far Dakota’s Cañons”: Native Absence and the Construction of an American Hero

“From Far Dakota’s Cañons” is a poem worth discussing for whom it chooses to depict and glorify, namely General George Custer. We can begin with this particular poem, because it represents Whitman in his most obvious form of textual imperialist propaganda. In the context of my argument, and in light of historical expansionist rhetoric, “From Far Dakota’s Cañons” clearly illustrates how horrific deeds and actions of the oppressors are carefully distorted, even masked. This dehistoricization and masking results in a “new” rhetoric--whether textual or verbal--that ultimately commends, even mythicizes, the expansionist’s actions. The transformation furthers his interests while erasing the atrocities committed. Dehistoricization and mythicization of Custer’s “accomplishments” also leads

to negation and erasure of the Sioux; as Custer is elevated to the position of a noble hero, the Sioux--when they *are* depicted--wrongly appear as cunning, irrational savages. The dehistoricization and mythicization negates the Sioux, because Whitman masks and ignores their actual brave, but desperate attempts to thwart off U.S governmental intrusion. The Sioux's last efforts against expansionist invasion--their *true* plight--instead twist into an inaccurate, distorted form that lessens the American Indian as it strengthens the American expansionist movement.

We must first historically situate the event on which Whitman builds (and distorts) his poem. In 1866, the U.S. government began negotiations with the Sioux, who were deemed "hostile" after Red Cloud and other warriors attacked a band of whites headed to gold fields in Montana (Welch with Stekler 11). Two years later, the Treaty of 1868 was settled, out of which arose the Great Sioux Reservation; part of the Treaty stated that the Natives would not cede hunting grounds in the territories of Wyoming and Montana (12). In 1873, Custer came to the Montana territory to guard surveyors planning the Northern Pacific Railroad; there, he had his first encounter with Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse (12). The following year, Custer and his expedition discovered gold in the Black Hills of South Dakota, and they reported the news back to the U.S. government; a year later, the government attempted to negotiate with the Sioux in order to purchase the Black Hills, but the Sioux refused (12). In *Literary Culture and U.S. Imperialism: From the Revolution to World War II* (2000), John Carlos Rowe points out that Anglo-American historical documents often only show the apparent religious significance of the Black Hills for the Sioux; however, the "Black Hills (*He Sapa*) gained this sacredness in part for their value as rich hunting grounds" (237). The battle in which General Custer would fall largely stemmed

from the Sioux's spiritual and economic protection of their land from U.S. expansion and conquest.

The Sioux were angry with the whites for breaking their part of the promise in the Treaty of 1868. Whites had penetrated the northern unceded territory in search of gold; in addition, they had crossed into the reservation itself (Utley 19). In retribution, many of the Natives slipped away to reside in the unceded territory west of the Great Sioux reservation (20). Whites kept coming to the Sioux country, and the Sioux continued to reside in areas beyond the designated reservation. Finally, the government decided that peace could only be achieved in the northern plains if all Indians stayed on the reservation (20). In December of 1875, the Commission of Indian Affairs issued an order to Sitting Bull and his band that all Sioux Indians living outside of the reservation must permanently move within it by January 31, or be considered "hostile" (Utley 20, Welch with Stekler 12). This order convinced very few of the Sioux. Their refusal resulted in government commands to take the Sioux by force; Colonel John Gibbon, General Alfred Terry, General Custer, General George Crook, and Major Marcus Reno were dispatched to the Montana territory in May of 1876 (Utley 21). Their "assignment" resulted in the attack at Little Big Horn.

Those involved in the final attempt to guard the land from the U.S. troops were from six Sioux tribes that had set up camp at the Little Big Horn in June 1876, for the Sun Dance ceremony and the Teton Council (Rowe 238). The six tribes were members from Hunkpapas, Oglala, Minneconjous, Blackfeet Sioux, Sans Arcs, and Brulés (Welch with Stekler 48). Referring to the fateful day that Custer and his soldiers appeared at the Little Big Horn, Rowe states:

The Lakota narrative is far closer to the historical facts of the attacks by General Custer and Major Reno on the Sioux villages than popular Euro-American

accounts of the U.S. cavalry ‘surrounded’ by Indians. Quite the opposite, the Sioux found their homes invaded by troops ordered to exterminate them, and Custer’s ‘last stand’ was a direct consequence of the combined Sioux force that he had underestimated in size and ability to resist. (238)

As we will soon see, Whitman’s construction of Custer as a martyred, fallen American hero in “From Far Dakota’s Cañons” thus places him as a member of the “Euro-American” majority that Rowe notes. The poet’s biased purposes in the textual inclusion are to elevate Custer into a noble American icon, all the while ignoring the General’s reputation as a “great Indian killer”—this reputation stemmed from his “successful” attack and slaughter of a Southern Cheyenne village eight years prior to Little Big Horn (Welch with Stekler 149).

Maurice Kenny and Mari Sandoz argue that Custer not only attacked the Sioux because of government orders, but also for his own publicity. The American people were soon to decide on the next presidential candidate, and Custer was hoping to be nominated for the position. Kenny argues, “his aim in this attack, *not* battle, was to revive American sentiment. His last major campaign was in 1868 [. . .] he needed headlines and consequently brought along his own newspaper reporter” (37). Thus, Custer and his 264 men, against many of their own protests, attacked and were defeated by Sitting Bull and approximately 2,500 warriors from the six Sioux tribes (Loving 381).

At the beginning of the poem, a complete void and emptiness of the Sioux hangs over the landscape; Whitman’s textual inclusion immediately illustrates the Sioux’s decimation. The opening lines set up the dismal aftermath of the Little Big Horn battle: “From far Dakota’s cañons, / Lands of the wild ravine, the dusky Sioux, the lonesome stretch, the silence, / Haply to-day a mournful wail, haply a trumpet-note for heroes” (1-3). The immediacy of textual emptiness in these lines does not even allow for the “body” of

the Sioux to sing their death-song, a moment Whitman will permit the tree or Native in “Song of the Redwood-Tree.” At the outset, he negates and erases the textual “body” of the Sioux, allowing only a “mournful wail” to represent a meager poetic inclusion; the carefully placed words such as “dusky,” “lonesome,” and “silence” further attest to the Sioux’s textual exclusion.

The poet, known for often romanticizing Native languages and bodies, takes a very different approach here. Kenny states, “Whitman basically held the ‘doomed’ Indian as not a fit subject for verse: Indians neither produced nor were produced by Whitman’s hero, America, and merited only a veiled apparition or pitiful elegy” (35). The poet’s usage of “dusky Sioux” closely reflects Kenny’s “veiled apparition,” yet Whitman wrongly attributes death to the *entire* band of Sioux warriors. He dehistoricizes the facts by not mentioning that the Sioux largely outnumbered Custer and his troops, and that there were more Sioux survivors than there were on the U.S. side. 173 Indians died in the battle; on the U.S. side, 263 soldiers were killed--210 of them fought directly under Custer (Welch with Stekler 44). Kenny also calls the poem “about as accurate as [John] Keats attributing the discovery of the Pacific Ocean to Cortés” (36). As we will see, when Whitman feels less patriotic and less interested in elevating American icons, he returns to his romantic, Rousseauian side and often employs the “pitiful elegy” to the vanishing Native tribes. For now, Whitman’s priority is to textually include and elevate a man into the American canon of “heroes”; he does not mind distorting or ignoring facts in order to accomplish the task.

The second stanza then moves from the aftermath of the attack backward in time, to re-create the moment of Custer and his men:

The battle bulletin,

The Indian ambushade, the craft, the fatal environment,

The cavalry companies fighting to the last in sternest heroism,
 In the midst of their little circle, with their slaughter'd horses for
 breastworks,

The fall of Custer and all his officers and men. (4-8)

Here, the textual inclusion and “body” of Custer and his men largely overshadows any textual “body” of the Sioux. One line is devoted to re-creating the Sioux’s actions, yet Whitman’s inclusion of the warriors, as I have argued, is biased; he manipulates the inclusion of the Sioux to show them as cunning, dangerous, irrational savages. “The Indian *ambuscade*, the *craft*” represent the Sioux inaccurately, as if the Sioux waited at the Little Big Horn to ambush and surprise Custer and his men. True, as Rowe and Welch both point out, the Sioux *were* well aware that the U.S. troops would eventually arrive, and that a standoff would prove imminent. However, the Sioux’s actions at Little Big Horn were a direct result of the threat to quarantine them on the reservation, away from the Black Hills that the government so desperately desired. Yet, Whitman fails to mention or address the politics behind the battle in his poem; he portrays the Sioux as waiting to attack the soldiers without any justified reason.

Line six then concentrates on textually including and (mis)representing the “heroic” and “brave” retribution of Custer and his men, as they gallantly attempt to thwart off the swarms of violent “savages.” Rowe speaks of popular Hollywood representations, in which “Indian ‘braves’ [are] encircling trapped soldiers” (238). Whitman, in his moment of glorifying Custer and his men, again distorts historical facts; he sounds like a precursory script writer to a John Wayne film, as he depicts the men caught “In the midst of their little circle” (7), the dead horses and blood all around them. The actual attack was not so neatly ordered and arranged; instead it was a confusing and chaotic set of circumstances that took

place in several locations (Rowe 238). Whitman's biased purposes in the textual inclusion of the Sioux thus wrongly represents them; in addition, the inaccurate depiction then casts more favorable, "honorable," and "noble" light on Custer and his men. In creating a poetic and real-life hero, the poet furthers the historical nineteenth-century motif of Eurocentric portrayals, the portrayals that Rowe points out have been all too common. Then again, Whitman's appeal is to the average American public; as mentioned earlier, the poem first appeared in the New York *Tribune* soon after the event took place. If Whitman is the voice that "speaks" for the American, he is also the voice that states what it is that the American wants to hear and believe. Perhaps he is only echoing the popular nationalist outrage that occurs in times of American crisis. On the other hand, the poem also works as propaganda, as will "Song of the Redwood-Tree," to justify American expansionism. In this particular case, a brave American has fallen trying to acquire greater properties for his country, and thus the fight should continue in his name--if America is to continue to prosper and grow.

After the second stanza, Whitman moves away from, and does not return to, his brief depiction of the "savage" Sioux; his attention rests solely on Custer. In the first stanza, the reader imagines the morbid landscape strewn with bloody Sioux bodies, and the reader hears their "mournful wail" (3). The poetic inclusion immediately indicates the Sioux's violent exclusion. In the second stanza, the re-created bodies of the Sioux are waiting to slaughter Custer and the troops. The Sioux's depiction and inclusion, much like that of the non-European in "Song of the Redwood-Tree" and "Salut au Monde!," does not benefit them, but instead benefits Whitman's own purposes; the purposes transform into the elevated propaganda of heroism that he wishes to instill in his reader.

In "From Far Dakota's Cañons," Whitman can only "properly" elevate Custer to his glorious and immortal height--giving him ultimate textual and real-life inclusion into the

canon of American heroes--by overall evoking the complete absence, destruction and exclusion of the Sioux. Although the poet portrays Custer's eventual fall, the Cavalry leader's re-created actions shine against the overall textual absence of the Sioux. It is as if more active textual inclusion of the Sioux's resistance would result in the possible subversion of Custer's power, so Whitman instead largely leaves the Sioux out of the poem. When he *does* include the Sioux, it is in ways that are detrimental to the Sioux as people and beneficial to Custer as a hero. Providing the Sioux warrior with a more realistic, inclusive textual "body" and "life" would thereby lessen the actual "accomplishments" of Custer in the West.

Welch calls "From Far Dakota's Cañons" a poem that "is better than the rest" of the slew of poems written about Custer during the nineteenth-century, but still a poem that "perfectly illustrates the elevation of event to myth" (280). He suggests:

And so as it should have been in an age which honored its poets, these bards, good and bad, began to create the Custer myth [. . .] Custer became a martyr,, yielding himself to save—what? Humanity? The white race? No matter. For almost a century, certainly until well after the Second World War, Custer's name was synonymous with glorious mortality, or better yet, glorious immortality. It was inevitable that historians would get into the act and perpetuate the myth—objectivity be damned—that Custer was 'brave' and 'noble' and Sitting Bull was 'clever' and 'cunning.' In our historical memory the Indians remained savages, redskins, fiendish, bloodthirsty, soulless. (280-281)

Whitman's poem serves as one of the many historic elements that illustrates Welch's argument of the "event to myth." It seems fair to suggest that the greater Whitman's poetic models of the Ideal American behave and act, the less their "enemy" is given realistic textual

life and inclusion. In order for Whitman to help immortalize Custer and begin perpetuating the myth of heroism, the Sioux in the poem must, through textual inclusion, either be exterminated by the hero, or adhere to the dehistoricized mold of irrational savages: the propaganda in the poem reflects and simultaneously reinforces the popular Euro-American view of Native Americans in the wake of expansionism.

The third and fourth stanzas now shift from the battlefield and Custer's feats to inside Whitman's head. Textual inclusion of "others"--both "good" and "bad"--momentarily stops, and the poet shares his intimate, but dark and dismal feelings with the reader. "As sitting in dark days, / Lone, sulky, through the time's thick murk looking in vain for light, for hope" (13-14). Here, the reader does not hear the traditionally upbeat and joyous Whitman, but rather the lonely and depressed Whitman. "From Far Dakota's Cañons" was written over ten years after the Civil War ended; while most of the poem attempts to glorify a "hero," the third and fourth stanzas reflect the lack of hope and "heroes" in America during the 1870s. In *Walt Whitman's Native Representations* (1994), Ed Folsom notes this despair:

The poem is finally more about Whitman's own 'dark days,' his reduced life in a reduced materialistic America, searching desperately for any signs of vital American ideas and ideals [. . .] Custer was the best that current events could offer. So, for Whitman, Custer ends up aptly described as 'Desperate and glorious,' and there is clearly some desperation on Whitman's part in having to cast up Custer as the model of American glory. (65)

As Folsom rightly argues, it seems a desperate stretch to attempt to make a martyr out of a man who held a fondness for slaughtering Indians, and who was known unfavorably by his own soldiers as "Hard-backsides" and "Iron-ass" (Kenny 36). The nicknames given to

Custer do not match the sentiment Whitman depicts in his poem, when he creates Custer as “Leaving behind thee a memory sweet to soldiers” (25). Yet, as I have tried to suggest, Whitman also sees the heroless age as a chance to pull America up by its bootstraps; he uses the events at Little Big Horn, however distorted, to re-focus the American eye on its own members--members that are continuing to pave the way to American conquest and glory.

As Whitman’s all-encompassing gaze at humanity eventually compresses into a tunnel-vision lens benefiting the Euro-American and America, his hero cannot be any other than one of European descent. Again, he can textually “celebrate” other races and cultures inside and outside of America’s borders, but heroes of non-European descent have no actual place in the poet’s America. Kenny asks, “How is it that Geronimo, Roman Nose, Crazy Horse, and Chief Joseph were not fit subjects for epics, great warriors and heroes to their people which indeed they are?” (37). It is an important question to consider, both in Whitman’s nineteenth-century and in the history of the Western canon. If he does allow Native Americans a textual place in his poem, he manipulates their voice, substituting a voice that negates indigenous voices and lives and instead benefits the Westerner or American. Folsom perhaps best attempts to answer Kenny’s question. In reference to recurring Indian imagery in Whitman’s poems, Folsom states, “that imagery reveals a tortured ambivalence about the role America’s natives would play in the development of the country’s character; it is an ambivalence so deep that by the time of Custer’s last stand, the only way Whitman could deal with it was to leave the Indians out of the picture” (65).

Thus, leaving the Sioux body and voice out of the poetic setting and making a final return to Custer, Whitman ends his poem. “I’hou of the tawny flowing hair in battle, / I erewhile saw, with erect head, pressing ever in front, bearing a bright sword in thy hand, / Now ending well in death the splendid fever of thy deeds” (19-21). Again, Custer takes the

stage; his deeds are spotlighted against the backdrop of dying screams from American and Sioux men; his “tawny flowing hair” suggests an Adonis or Greek god-like figure. The inaccurate elevation to myth continues, as Folsom points out that the long hair and the sword, instead of a pistol, makes Custer “a hero straight out of a romantic legend” (65). Whitman’s particular word of “splendid” to describe Custer’s “deeds” further negates the poetic Native body and voice, as “splendid” also refers to the real-life death of some of the Sioux warriors. Simultaneously, “splendid” elevates Custer to the top, perhaps even beyond the top, of the Western and American hierarchy.

The politics of textual inclusion in “From Far Dakota’s Cañons” work differently than they will in the upcoming poems. “Osceola,” “Song of the Redwood-Tree,” and “Salut au Monde!,” while all manipulating the “other’s” textual inclusion to serve Whitman’s and the reader’s purposes, at least provide the non-European with a textual body and voice before eventually distancing and / or excluding them. This, however, is not the case in “From Far Dakota’s Cañons.” The privileging spectacle of Custer and the overall lack of the Sioux body and voice do little, if anything, to textually include and provide a place for the Native, either in the space of the poem, or in the progressive, expanding America. Against the textual erasure and lack of the Sioux, Whitman has constructed an American icon whose actions and deeds will spur the country to further glory.

Chapter Two

“Osceola” and “Song of the Redwood-Tree”: Elegiac Sympathy and Naturalization of the Native American Disappearance

The poems “Osceola” and “Song of the Redwood-Tree” are the second in my reading. These two poems display Whitman’s second form of textual inclusion, namely elegiac sympathy and naturalization. “Osceola” serves as the first instance where the poet uses the inclusion-to-exclusion tactic. Both the naturalization and the inclusion-to-exclusion process will continue in “Song of the Redwood-Tree.” There is a noticeable increase in geographic American space between “Osceola” and “Song of the Redwood-Tree.” “Osceola” takes place in Florida; by the time we look at “Song of the Redwood-Tree,” the Native disappearance has spread across the continent to the California seashore--the edge

of the American frontier. Whitman starts out small in his Native representation, and ends by facing westward across the Pacific waves: an entire continent of Native displacement, disappearance and extinction at his back.

I. “Osceola”

“Osceola”--albeit in less obvious imperialist propaganda--uses the elegy-like form to pay tribute to, defer, and simultaneously legitimize the “natural” rapid disappearance of the Indian from the American lands. Whitman commemorates the death of Osceola, a Seminole leader. Osceola fought during the Second Seminole War in Florida; he was known for leading the resistance to the U.S. government using modern warfare tactics (Folsom 77). Osceola was eventually captured through a devious plan hatched by the U.S. troops. The soldiers planned to meet him during an apparent truce; however, upon the meeting, the soldiers imprisoned him and sold his wife into slavery (77). Before the poem that appears in *Leaves of Grass*, Whitman encloses a note about Osceola; the poet claims that as a young man, he heard the story of Osceola’s final days and death in 1838 from a U.S. Marine stationed at Fort Moultrie in South Carolina. Whitman states, “[Osceola] was surrender’d to our troops, imprison’d and literally died of ‘a broken heart,’ at Fort Moultrie. He sicken’d of his confinement—the doctor and officers made every allowance and kindness possible for him; then the close” (*Leaves* 550). Again, Whitman distorts the actual circumstances of Osceola’s capture and death. Folsom states, “Whitman’s note to his poem ignores these facts, focusing instead on how the U.S. physicians and officers ‘made every allowance and kindness possible’ for the chief” (77). Kenny also points out the dehistoricization, noting that instead of Osceola dying from sadness, “most historians agree he died of malaria or possibly from being poisoned or from maltreatment. Later his head was cut off and placed

on display in the Medical Museum” (35). Unlike in “From Far Dakota’s Cañons,” Whitman here actually includes a live Native body, but again, the altered actions and circumstances of Osceola in the textual inclusion benefit Whitman’s biased purposes. The romantic, ritualistic actions of Osceola, before he dies, and the note about the doctor’s “kindness” are meant to soften and perhaps even legitimize the poetic representation and historical fact of the “disappearing Indian.”

The textual inclusion of elegiac sympathy proves temporary, as is *all* of Whitman’s textual inclusion that addresses Native Americans. His poetic inclusion of sympathy serves as an act of remembrance and homage; memory works as the inclusive presence to lessen the void of a vanishing Chief or people. However, this reflective quality of the elegy undermines itself by the simultaneous, underlying, implied necessity of disappearance, in order to clear a void for the expanding settler heading westward.

The poem is short enough to include in its entirety:

When his hour for death had come,

He slowly rais’d himself from the bed on the floor,

Drew on his war-dress, shirt, leggings, and girdled the belt,

around his waist,

Call’d for vermilion paint (his looking glass was held before

him,)

Painted half his face and neck, his wrists, and back-hands.

Put the scalp-knife carefully in his belt—then lying down, resting

a moment,

Rose again, half sitting, smiled, gave in silence his extended

hand to each and all,

Sank faintly low to the floor (tightly grasping the tomahawk
handle,)

Fix'd his look on wife and little children—the last:

(And here a line in memory of his name and death.) (*Leaves* 550-551)

The poem is laden with sensationalized romanticism, as Osceola peacefully goes about preparing for death. There lies the disturbing implication, in the performance of Osceola's textual inclusion, that he finds peace with his death and disappearance. (We will see this idea continue with the tree or Native in "Song of the Redwood-Tree"). Whitman either does not know, or fails to recognize, that Osceola was captured through trickery; he does not mention that Osceola's death may have been brought on intentionally by his captors. Instead, he constructs Osceola's death as *imminent*; whether imprisoned or not, his time has come to move from poetic inclusion to poetic and physical exclusion. All that Osceola needs are his war paint, tomahawk, and his family, and he is thus ready to step out of the poem and out of American history.¹

The romanticized, ritualistic actions of Osceola, on the way to his death, are Whitman's textual inclusion of elegiac sentimentality or sympathy. The poetic insertion of his war attire, the face paint, and the scalp knife signify what a great, fierce, and noble life Osceola once led. Even in the bleak confines of the jail, the reader catches reflective glimpses of a formerly great warrior. Yet, the echoes of nobility and fierceness lie contained (and safe) within the ordered arrangement of room, bed, and jail bars. As Osceola raises himself up, lies back down, and then again rises, the reader through Whitman "feels" the fatigue or restlessness that comes with the onset of death. When Osceola sinks to the floor for the last time, tomahawk in hand, the reader finally "feels" sadness at a noble warrior's last moments. The carefully placed actions and rituals of Osceola projects his human

qualities into a dehistoricized, almost mythic frame. As the textual attention centers on Osceola's noble past, the reader does not "notice" the life that Osceola will soon leave. The textual inclusion and insertion of sentimentality in the wake of a body's poetic and physical inclusion-to-exclusion provides a sort of distanced and temporary deferment of death. Whitman can distract the reader from the actual moment of Native death and disappearance with the inclusion of sentiment; yet, at the same time, he endorses it *through* the emotion. Sentimentality or sympathy works as a subversion or deferment, as well as a simultaneous containment of death, because feelings of sadness, in the context of the poem, *exist* due to the presence of death.

In *The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing, and Imperial Administration* (1993), David Spurr discusses the tactic of "aestheticization" at work in publications such as *National Geographic* and travel brochures. Aestheticization works most commonly through photography, detaching and separating a person from his or her geographic origin or daily life, while at the same time glorifying or romanticizing him or her; all the while the physical circumstances of reality pertaining to that person remain hidden and unacknowledged by the viewer or reader. Spurr states, "Imagination and reflection both connect us to and protect us from pain [. . .] the economy of pity engages imagination and reflection in such a way as to make the suffering of others both real and removed from us" (53). Whitman employs this function of sentiment, the "economy of pity," in his textual inclusion and "photo" of Osceola. The reflection and sympathy toward Osceola remove the reader from the actuality: that he is imprisoned through trickery, and that he is about to die, possibly from the hands of his captors. However, Whitman's simultaneous intentions are to connect the reader *to* Osceola's impending death, for as I and others have suggested, there is no room for the Native American in the poet's progressive America.

Finally, the sympathy or sentiment works as Whitman's biased purpose *behind* the textual inclusion of the sentiment; the sympathy placed within the poem attempts to justify and amend the underlying textual and real-life exclusion of Osceola and the Native American from Western expansion. The "line in memory of his name and death" commemorates, while simultaneously sealing the fate of Osceola; it contains and finalizes Osceola's exclusion, and the sympathy proves temporary as the teleological steamroller of progression and expansion pushes past it. It seems strange that Whitman's closing line cannot commemorate Osceola's life; it instead recognizes his "death." Perhaps noting his life would provide Osceola with too much of a textual body, as is the case with the slaughtered Sioux in "From Far Dakota's Cañons."

In any case, Whitman's treatment of American Indians always takes two specific forms. One form works as the example of the dehistoricized, savage Indian; we see this, when the Indian *does* receive treatment, in "From Far Dakota's Cañons." We also see similar patterns of Native savagery in "Pioneers! O Pioneers!" The other form taken is the sentimental portrayal of the spectral-like Native disappearing from the American lands. This portrayal appears most evidently in poems such as "The Torch," "The Pilot in the Mist," "Yonnonadio," and in part 6 of "The Sleepers." The second of the two forms, as we will see, continues in "Song of the Redwood-Tree." Whatever form Whitman takes with his textual inclusion of the Native American, it is a form that excludes the Indian--either due to savagery or because of extinction--from an active place in the expanding, progressive America.

II. "Song of the Redwood-Tree"

"Song of the Redwood-Tree," the next poem in my discussion, is another example of how Whitman continues to elegize Native Americans--at the same time using the elegy to naturalize their disappearance. This poem signifies the next wave in his textual expansionism. In "Song of the Redwood-Tree," Whitman's elegiac sympathy meshes with his Darwinian rhetoric. We do not see this as evidently in "Osceola." Here, the poet's interest in Darwinian theory moves the idea of Native American disappearance into more sinister and problematic functions. One might argue that Whitman, in "Osceola," simply records the moment of a person at the end of his life; an assertion may be made that any human being eventually must die. Yet, in the case of "Song of the Redwood-Tree," the scientific inevitability of an *entire* race's demise becomes apparent. The group, in this case, the Native Americans, must step out of the way of the expanding settler, because scientific law deems them as a weaker or inferior element; the weak, again determined by Darwin's theories, must be replaced by the strong. Now, Indians not only die or disappear because they are at the end of their natural life, but scientific theory insists that they *must*, due to their "weakness." "Song of the Redwood-Tree" is key to my overall argument, for now Whitman has a force greater than him to help justify the temporary qualities of textual inclusion; this "assistance" allows him to push his expansionist language from a jail cell in Florida across the continent to the California seashore.

During the 1870s, some crucial events were occurring in America. For Whitman himself, the year 1873 was not a particularly happy one. In January of that year, he suffered a stroke while in Washington, D.C. (Kaplan 346). His recovery was slow, and he often suffered from nausea and depression. Four months after his stroke, his mother died. By the end of 1873, his health had returned (347-348). America itself, during the 1870s, was also in

a period of economic depression. In September of 1873, shortly before Whitman wrote the poem, a wealthy Pennsylvania banker named Jay Cooke closed his banking house.² People in the East were now unable to pay their loans on mortgages, and approximately 5,000 businesses shut their doors, forcing workers into the streets (Zinn 237). In *Walt Whitman's America: A Cultural Biography* (1996), David Reynolds notes that “Song of the Redwood-Tree” is an example of Whitman’s “now complicated relationship to the new industrial America,” and that in the poem, “Whitman now insists that the new America will be planted in the Far West, away from the East and its problems” (512). The closing of Cooke’s bank was one of many factors leading to the depression that would last throughout the 1870s.

Also during the 1870s, President Ulysses S. Grant initiated the Indian Peace Policy (Berkhofer 167). Various Indian tribes were confined to specific reservations; the government decided that this tactic was “best” for the well-being of everyone. Although originally conceived for the Plains Indians during the 1850s, the idea of the reservation--the main subject of the Peace Policy--gained increased popularity again in the 1870s (169). An 1873 summary of the reservation plan, drawn up by the Secretary of Interior, stated that at the reservations, missionaries would teach American Indians agriculture, Christianity, and other “civilized” principles, in order that “these savages may be taught a better way of life than they have heretofore pursued”(cited in Berkhofer 169). While Grant was busy attempting to “civilize” the American Indian during the 1870s, he also had his eye set on geographic areas abroad. He gained American territorial control of the Pacific with claims to Samoa, as well as with the Hawaiian reciprocity treaty; Grant also had an interest in areas such as Cuba and Santa Domingo (Crapol and Schonberger 147). These events, both

within America's borders and beyond, circulated around Whitman before and during the writing of "Song of the Redwood-Tree."

The first five lines of the poem set up the textual body, and therefore the inclusion of the tree. After these lines, Whitman enacts the voice of the tree, as it sings its farewell song. However, even before Whitman moves in as the poetic medium, both giving the tree ability and license to speak, these first lines provide an ominous prelude to the tree's inevitable exclusion--the lines work as a silencing even before the tree speaks:

A California song,

A prophecy and indirection, a thought impalpable to breathe as air,

A chorus of dryads, fading, departing, or hamadryads departing,

A murmuring, fateful, giant voice, out of the earth and sky,

Voice of a mighty dying tree in the redwood forest dense. (1.1-5)

The voice of the tree, arguably, can be read as analogous to the "voice" of the Native American. This assertion places the "voice" in the historical context of both the nationwide slaughter and annexation of Native tribes to reservations, due to the white settlers' expansion during the nineteenth-century. Whitman often romanticizes both the Native body and Native language; he was particularly enamored by words such as "Paumanok" and "Mannahatta," names given to Long Island and New York by the Delaware Indians of Long Island.³ Yet, beyond the aesthetic fetishization of the Native body and the nostalgic attempt to historicize place with Native names, his viewpoint of the actual American Indian "place" in the American population is one that often takes dismal, imperialist implications.

David Moore notes the direct tie between Darwinian theory and Whitman's support and push for American expansionism. He argues, "the logic of his [Whitman's] Darwinism turns against the objects of his adoration. While he takes personal and intimate delight in

their [American Indians] noble features, he takes historical and distant delight in a nationalism that watches Indians die by that Darwinian ideology translated into the politics of Manifest Destiny” (158-159). Moore’s words apply to all of Whitman’s poems that deal with American Indians; they especially seem relevant in these first five lines of “Song of the Redwood-Tree.” The usage of “mighty” indicates reverence and respect, but “mighty” immediately precedes “dying”; the poet quickly jumps from noting “noble features” to the natural, Darwinian “necessity” of extinction. Whitman’s word choice of “prophecy” cleanses his hands of any direct responsibility or guilt; the “prophecy” of Darwinian extinction will occur regardless of U.S. penetration and settlement of new geographic spaces. While one might argue that Whitman never directly names a particular California Indian tribe in the poem, I would defend my assertion that the Redwood Tree equals the Native by pointing out the words “fading” and “departing” in line three. His employment of these verbs sounds very similar to section 16 of “Starting from Paumanok”:

The red aborigines,

Leaving natural breaths, sounds of rain and winds, calls as of birds
and animals in the woods, syllabled to us for names,

Okonee, Koosa, Ottawa, Monongahela, Sauk, Natchez, Chatta-
hoochee, Kaqueta, Oronoco,

Wabash, Miami, Saginaw, Chippewa, Oshkosh, Walla-Walla,
Leaving such names to the States *they melt, they depart*, charging the
water and the land with names. (16.240-245, emphasis mine)

Here, the “red aborigines” are linked to fifteen names and tribes. The textual inclusion of Indian names simultaneously indicates a textual and real-life erasure of bodies, as the Indian “melt[s],” “depart[s],” and, in less poetic language, ultimately is “leaving.” In “Song of the Redwood-Tree,” written more than thirteen years after “Starting from Paumanok,” the use of “fading” and “departing”--in reference to the Redwood tree--carries sinister implications,

when looked at in context of the Native disappearance. Even more evident is an article, “Memorials of the Red Men,” that Whitman wrote for the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* on July 9, 1846. In it, he states, “The aborigines of America are truly *melting* away like the snows of spring. An age or two, and for all that we have of them shall be debtors to the pen, the pencil, and the chisel of the sculptor” (*Collected* 457, emphasis mine). In three separate instances, the poet includes (or represents) the Native and the tree as naturally disappearing beneath the progressive movement of history. Whitman’s elegiac farewells to American Indians once more naturalize their ruin. In “Song of the Redwood-Tree,” even before the rest of the poem textually includes a voice and a body, he has *already* silenced and *excluded* the Native American.

In the next three lines, the reader hears the voice of the tree or Native American: “Farewell my brethren, / Farewell O earth and sky, farewell ye neighboring waters, / My time has ended, my term has come” (1.6-8). Whitman represents the voice of the tree or Indian, and yet his textual inclusion and presentation of the body and voice in fact strengthens the preceding five lines; the voice reflects and affirms its own disappearance. He constructs the inclusion of the tree’s body and voice to ultimately mold to his own insinuations: a historical moment and a historical body *must* dissipate and vanish in the present, to provide an empty space for the settler to fill. This moment of textual vanishing—one that will continue throughout the poem—reflects Spurr’s concept of “negation”; he speaks of negation as a tool of the Western writer, in “which Western writing conceives of the Other as absence, emptiness, nothingness, or death” (92). He goes on to assert that, “negation acts as a kind of provisional erasure, clearing a space for the expansion of the colonial imagination and for the pursuit of desire” (92-93). If we return to the idea that Whitman has biased purposes in

his expansionist poems, then negation and erasure ultimately work as the underlying, biased motives in “Song of the Redwood-Tree.”

Whitman’s presentation (and representation) of the tree or Native exclusion ultimately benefits the U.S. expansionists’ goals--and “desire[s]”--to fill in the projected empty void. Furthermore, his textual representation and inclusion of the tree’s or Native’s *willingness* to end its existence clearly relieves both the expansionists’ and the poet’s burden of responsibility or guilt; submission to the naturalness of Darwinian theory again becomes the final deciding factor. While the weaker link’s fate passes off to a higher power, it nevertheless falls back into a position that benefits the expansionist; in addition, the politics of negation through textual representation ultimately fit Whitman’s poetic purposes. As Spurr argues, “The writer is the original and ultimate colonizer, conquering the space of consciousness with the exclusionary and divisive structures of representation” (93). The immediacy of the poem and its implications lie directly before the reader, casting Whitman as the “ultimate colonizer.” As the poem moves on, his textual representation of the tree’s “necessary” disappearance continues to provide an empty space for the expansionist to fill.

Whitman, as he does in “Salut au Monde!,” makes reference to hearing the plight of the tree. In “Salut au Monde!,” as we will see, the principles of hearing record the hierarchy of lower and higher bodies engaged in life’s daily activities. However, in “Song of the Redwood-Tree,” hearing works as a recognized signifier of death: “I heard the mighty tree its death-chant chanting” (1.15), and “in my soul I plainly heard” (1.19). Hearing, as a physical indicator of disappearance and death, curiously moves into the soul. This moment, early in the poem, is where Whitman possibly expresses feelings of responsibility or guilt; the “soul” affirms and accepts what the expansionist body refuses to recognize. Perhaps

this marks a moment of a different possibility or outcome, a possible unification of both weaker and stronger link, rather than an exclusion of one of them.

Moore notes this factor in Whitman's work, where "philosophical transcendentalism mingles with Social Darwinism to echo the American public's common metaphysical and political concept of manifest destiny" (146). Moore compares two scholars, Sacvan Bercovitch and Floyd Stovall, and their opposing viewpoints. In Bercovitch's argument, a member of the dominant culture cannot move past transcendental ideas of unity and harmony; instead, the member simply reorganizes them to ultimately benefit and better the dominant social order. Thus, as Dimock argues, the Transcendentalists cannot escape the historical, political, and social contexts of their times. According to Stovall, Whitman's ultimate sense of morality and affirmation of universal rights--factors supposedly indicative of American democracy--exclude him from the category of a nineteenth-century expansionist. The poet's mentioning of "in my soul I plainly heard" perhaps works as the sympathy that Stovall suggests erases his position of an imperialist. Yet, the suggestion that Whitman remains outside the category of a nineteenth-century expansionism is clearly wrong, for the sympathy appears temporary; it can only go so far before Whitman's ulterior and teleological motives of American expansionism negate his own sympathy, as well as the tree or Native as a living, conscious being.

Moore's argument largely moves along the lines of Bercovitch's suggestions. In regards to the link between Transcendentalism and Manifest Destiny, Moore states, "they are blurred in relation to a conceptual center, a unity in American democracy, of which they form the spokes. The self does not identify with the other so much as erase it in the ideology of American immigration" (149-150). If indeed Whitman's aporia-like moment of "in my soul I plainly heard" reflects a possible other, unifying moment, I would suggest that

he contains and silences the possibility at the end of the stanza: the tree or Native states, “*Our time, our term has come*” (1.31). Moore concludes by noting that the “utopian ideal” becomes “structured by the dialectic into a progressive teleology which must both create and destroy its own past” (150). The past becomes the present moment, a moment which in turn moves into the future; however, the future does not encompass a transcendental, organic *All*. Instead, the teleology serves as a divisive sphere that includes the strong and excludes the weak. Whitman, as the poetic medium, asserts the idea of the tree’s “necessary” exclusion and disappearance; yet, by the tricky textual inclusion of having the tree speak for itself, he can circumnavigate around his own elegiac sympathy and responsibility. Again, the textual inclusion of the tree’s affirmation of its end relieves the poet of direct responsibility or guilt, while at the same time reinforcing his own poetic expansionist purposes.

After the tree’s affirmation, Whitman continues to construct the included “voice.” Here, the textual inclusion now shows the tree’s or Native’s *willingness (and happiness)* to depart:

*Nor yield we mournfully majestic brothers,
We who have grandly fill’d our time;
With Nature’s calm content, with tacit huge delight,
We welcome what we wrought for through the past,
And leave the field for them.*

*For them predicted long,
For a superber race, they too to grandly fill their time. (1.33-39)*

Whitman’s performance of inclusion shows the tree or Native completely at peace in its role as the vanishing past; it is as if it “knows” it cannot obstruct the Divine Hand of Manifest

Destiny. The poet's rhetoric of "superber race" directly infuses Darwinian theory into the death-song of the tree or Native; in addition, he can again defer the responsibility or guilt by both applying scientific fate to the tree or Native, as well as having the tree acknowledge and accept the fate itself. The above lines legitimize the dynamics of empire, as Whitman has the "other" nobly affirm its own destruction as a phase of natural human progress.

In the introduction to *De-scribing Empire: Post-colonialism and Textuality* (1994), Chris Tiffin and Alan Lawson argue that "imperial textuality appropriates, distorts, erases, but it also *contains*" (6). As I have repeatedly suggested, the underlying bias in the textual inclusion of the "other" always eventually results in exclusion (and thus containment) in Whitman's expansionist poems. Tiffin and Lawson go on to credit J.M. Coetzee for finding the "ultimate image" of containment. Coetzee has looked at Breyten Breytenbach, who was imprisoned for writing a poem that attacked Prime Minister John Vorster. In prison, Breytenbach was allowed to continue writing, provided that the poems would only be seen by the gaoler. Tiffin and Lawson argue that "the position of voice that results is deeply paradoxical. The voice is licensed in the double sense of being allowed, but remaining under the control of the licensor" (6). Tiffin and Lawson move on to discuss "voice" in terms of "total control of the subaltern" (6). Their comments about the "position of voice" seem applicable in all of Whitman's expansionist poems; most immediately in lines 24-71 of "Song of the Redwood-Tree." Through textual inclusion, the poet allows the tree or Native to speak, yet as it speaks, its death-song simultaneously positions the voice back into containment that benefits the expansionists' motives. The "position of [the tree or Native's] voice" is always "under the control of the licensor." Whitman, as the poetic representative, here serves as the licensor.

The tree's willingness to disappear increases as the death-song and the poem move on. Whitman's biased motives and motivations surface again, as the tree or Native announces: "*To the new culminating man, to you, the empire new / You promis'd long, we pledge, we dedicate*" (1.53-54). The voice of the tree, through Whitman as the "licensor," not only speaks for itself; the use of "we" and "our"--in the previous lines--represents a voice speaking of the dutiful willingness of *many*: whether it is the Redwood forest or the different California Indian tribes. Finally, the tree's last words sum up its Darwinian duty and necessity: "*To duly fall, to aid, unreck'd at last,/ To disappear, to serve*" (1.71-72). These lines also seem to represent Whitman's own views of Native Americans. Later in his life, Horace Traubel asks the poet about racial amalgamation. Whitman's response is that "The nigger, like the Injun, will be eliminated: it is the law of races, history, what-not [. . .] Someone proves that a superior grade of rats comes and then all the minor rats are cleared out." Traubel comments, "That sounds like Darwin," and Whitman retorts with, "Does it? It sounds like me, too." (cited in Folsom 89). For Whitman, the Native can "serve" by completely stepping out of history, in order to make room for the naturalized next phase of progression. The italicized voice stops after this point, but the poet, as the "licensor," provides a double-affirmation of the tree or Native's disappearance. He returns, noting:

Such words combined from the redwood-tree, as of voices ecstatic,
ancient and rustling,

The century-lasting, unseen dryads, singing, withdrawing,

[.]

To the deities of the modern henceforth yielding,

The chorus and indications, the vistas of coming humanity, the
settlements, features all. (1.76-77, 80-81)

Thus, as part one ends, the death-song fades into the distance, into the past, and the tree's or Indian's textual inclusion becomes the necessary Darwinian rule of exclusion.

There is something curious in the fact that Whitman's central protagonist in the poem is a Redwood tree; yet the tree can still speak, think, and feel simultaneous anguish and joy. One function of the tree may simply be Whitman's fascination with the California forest as representing the American West. His Transcendental views of nature as a living, breathing, interconnected part of the Whole may have been enough justification for him to create a poem where a tree freely speaks. On the other hand, if we look at the historical context of the Native tribes' widespread disappearance across the country, the tree's voice again seems to represent a vanishing people more than a vanishing forest. Why, then, did Whitman substitute the voice of the Indian with the voice of the tree? Tiffin and Lawson bring up an important point that may help answer the question. They argue, "Colonialism conceptually depopulated countries either by acknowledging the native but relegating him or her to the category of subhuman, or simply by looking through the native and denying his or her own existence [. . .] only empty spaces can be settled, so the space had to be made empty by ignoring or dehumanizing the inhabitants" (5). Whitman's textual inclusion of the tree thus attempts to pay heed to (and not ignore) the disappearing voice in California; by including the voice, he can still grapple with the problem. However, at the same time, the substitution of tree over Indian textually results in the two techniques of the colonialist that Tiffin and Lawson note. By the inclusion of tree over Native, Whitman in fact negates an actual human body; he *reduces* the Native American to a tree, a lower-level being on the hierarchy. Furthermore, the tree over the Indian makes it much easier for him to "look through" the actual Native. While acknowledging the problem, he can also contain it with

the Darwinian necessity of disappearance; it proves much easier to move past the plight of the tree than it is to move past the plight of an actual people.

Spurr, Tiffin, and Lawson all have noted the colonialist's concept of clearing an empty space. This space appears in the shorter sections two and three of "Song of the Redwood-Tree." Toward the ending, the tree's voice is now silenced, and the settler builds and disperses over the newly opened void. Whitman celebrates "At last the New arriving, assuming, taking possession, / A swarming and busy race settling and organizing everywhere" (2.89-90). Earlier, the tree or Native's voice indicated its weaker abilities and capabilities; it was a part of the Whole that simultaneously could not survive in the Whole. Ironically, the poet's voice now notes the strong, compatible characteristics of the settlers: "The new society at last, proportionate to Nature, / In man of you, more than your mountain peaks or stalwart trees imperial" (3.99-100). Whereas the tree or Native was represented as a weaker element *in* nature, the new settler appears almost *higher* than nature; the tone takes on an Enlightenment-like, conquering-over-nature view. Whitman ends the poem by stating, "I see the genius of the modern, child of the real and ideal, / Clearing the ground for broad humanity, the true America, heir of the past so grand, / To build a grander future" (3.103-105). There is the possibility that section one of the poem shows elegiac sympathy toward the vanishing tree or Native; however, the sympathy dwindles (along with the tree or Native) in sections two and three. Now, energy and excitement replace the sympathy; the poet feels very positive and confident as he watches the settlers and looks toward the future. Whitman has now moved across the entire United States in his poetic expansion; he has erased the Native American from coast to coast, in order for his ideal Euro-American to fill the void. By textually evoking the absence of one race, he

has simultaneous space to project his utopian American vision. With the American lands now filled with his idealization, the poet next turns to face the entire world.

Chapter Three

“Salut au Monde!”: Global Hierarchies and Subordination

As I argued in the introduction, “Salut au Monde!” works as the culmination of Whitman’s expansionist vision. He now casts his gaze upon the world before him. In *An American Empire: Expansionist Cultures and Policies, 1881-1887* (1990), Walter Grünzweig points out the often common (mis)reading of “Salut au Monde!,” stating, “true universality seems indeed to be established. A poet embracing mankind; this is how millions of readers around the world could have read this poem” (60). Grünzweig rightly proceeds to then discuss Whitman’s poems in the light of American imperialism. “Salut au Monde!” is necessary to discuss last in my chapters dealing with Whitman’s poems, in order to show the shift from

the continental United States to the entire world. The world's First and Third-World countries now serve as the final stage in American domination. In the poem, we see the third and most subtle form of Whitman's expansionist rhetoric--the idea of global hierarchies creating a subordinate relationship with America. It is crucial to look at a "global" poem such as "Salut au Monde!" in the context of American development; one cannot discuss American empire without analyzing how geographic expansionism, racial categories, technological and economic infiltration affects the lives of "others" abroad, and not solely within the U.S. interior. To momentarily review the premise of my discussion, one of Whitman's main purposes in representing the world's vast peoples and regions is to show how the non-European "other"--from racial, evolutionary, technological, and economic standpoints--proves incapable of contributing to and assimilating into a progressive America. At the same time, the poet's other main purpose is to represent how American progression and influence have reached around the globe; this Euro-American privileging both reassures and reasserts Western identity and superiority, while concurrently showing the vast gap between America and the "other." This distance and exclusion between Euro-American self and "other" serves as a necessity in order for nineteenth-century America to claim its position as a global, progressive leader.

In the 1840s, America was engaged in conflict with Mexico for the territory of Texas; as the 1850s commenced, the U.S. continued to consider areas beyond its borders as the next step in geographic, technological, and economic expansion. In 1854, the Clayton-Bulwer treaty was settled, which led to U.S. trade agreements in Central America (Williams 288). Although territorial expansion during the 1850s primarily looked to the south of America, many Americans focused on economic expansion abroad. Williams notes:

Some Southerners supported the commercial push across the Pacific. Their trade

interests were reinforced by the idea that such a move would help them hold their own in the territorial West, both directly and as a political *quid pro quo*. The result was a China policy designed for ‘maintaining order there’ so that the nation’s great economic opportunities would not become the ‘prey of European ambition. (289)

At the same time, men such as Perry McDonough Collins and Asa Whitney, who were backed by President Franklin Pierce, as well as the Western Union Company, presented the idea of a telegraph system that would reach across to all of Siberia, and then south to India and west to Paris, Berlin, and London; the idea appeared as a vast, technological, globalized possibility, with the profits filtering back into the Mississippi Valley (289). In his discussion, Williams includes a statement from Whitney: “ ‘Here we stand forever [. . .] we reach out one hand to all Asia, and the other to all Europe, willing for all to enjoy the great blessings we possess [. . .] but *all* [of them] tributary, and at our will subject to us’ ” (289). As we will see, Whitney’s idea of the world “enjoying” American achievements directly parallels Whitman’s centered Euro-American rhetoric in “Salut au Monde!”

Whitman constantly made revisions in “Salut au Monde!” until 1881 (*Leaves* 237), so it is necessary to consider American expansionist events following 1856. After the Civil War ended, economic expansion abroad greatly increased, by the use of waterways and railroads. During the War, William Henry Seward, a spokesman for the Republican Party, envisioned the idea of a transcontinental railroad, insisting that it was a primary instrument for American control of the markets in the Orient; this railroad would secure trade in Asia for America, positioning the U.S. as the center of world power (Crapol and Schonberger 147). In the 1860s and 1870s, American foreign trade was threatened by competing countries, most noticeably Great Britain (157-158). In 1879, President Grant urged Congress to

consider a bill that would revive the merchant marine; in support of the bill, Representative John Lynch of Maine said that the merchant marine was “essential to the maintenance of a first class Power” (cited in Crapol and Schonberger 158). However, because of a sharp divide on both sides, the bill was defeated (159). Due to an increase in the export of agricultural products from America to Europe between 1878 and 1881, the merchant marine proposal was soon revived. As Crapol and Schonberger note:

To sustain economic recovery from the severe depression of the 1870s, many businesses, agricultural, financial, and political leaders believed that the United States had to acquire and maintain free and effective access to the world marketplace [. . .] An increasing number of Americans accepted the view that new policies were necessary to extend and secure an American-dominated world marketplace [. . .] [a] united coalition of metropolitan, commercial, and maritime interests [. . .] argued that prosperity could not be sustained without government aid in securing a wider market by means of direct steamship communications with Mexico, Japan, and China. (159)

Undoubtedly, the 1850s-1880s served as a crucial time in American expansion abroad. The country’s desire to take the stage as the world leader mirrors the global vision and rhetoric of Whitman in “Salut au Monde!”

In the first section, a persona of Whitman asks the poet a series of questions: “What widens within you Walt Whitman? / What waves and soils exuding? / What climes? What persons and cities are here?” (1.5-7). In the second section, the persona steps aside, and Whitman takes over. Here, the reader listens to Whitman’s expanding, all-inclusive voice: “Within me latitude widens, longitude lengthens, / Asia, Africa, Europe, are to the east—America is provided for in the west” (1.14-15). Immediately, the poet *does widen* geographic

boundaries, spots that will later provide the space for his illuminations of Western expansion and growth. Yet, at the outset, he simultaneously reinforces binary oppositions by noting the division between East and West, in which America (or the West) is the privileged opposition--in terms of the country that "is provided for." Already, Whitman's circulation contains its own limits.

In *U.S. Orientalisms: Race, Nation, and Gender in Literature, 1790-1890* (1998), Malini Schueller borrows Edward Said's ideas of the European construction of the Orient and uses them to analyze the American nineteenth-century. She argues that "Emerson's raced construction of India as a passive and spiritual Other against an active and material New World is an anxious attempt to recuperate the nation [U.S.] as vibrant and whole" (16). Schueller's analysis of Emerson appears applicable to Whitman as well; yet for Whitman, all "areas" of the East, as we will see, appear as archaic, mythical relics of the past. The poet has much pride in his young country's potential and ability; yet underneath the pride hangs a sense of uncertainty and insecurity. He can textually include and represent Asia, Africa, and Europe in his widening latitude and lengthening longitude; however, in order to temper his fears and doubts of America's position on the world's stage, Whitman must at the same time provide an insistence on the opposition of East and West--the former signifying a dimming, static past, and the latter a vibrant and hopeful present and future.

Anne McClintock, in *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (1995), discusses "anachronistic space" as a trope and tool of Western discourse. Similar to negation, anachronistic space works as a "technology of surveillance in the late Victorian era [. . .] [where] colonized people [. . .] do not inhabit history proper but exist in a permanently anterior time within the geographic space of the modern empire" (30). She goes on to explain that this "anterior time" runs counter-parallel to the growth and vitality of the

Westerner; it leads backward to a space outside of time and history, in which the “other” resides in a world of degeneration and barbarism. This constructed space serves as the spot where the “other” becomes transferred, “symbolically displaced” (30) from his or her native land. While Whitman takes a subtler approach in “Salut au Monde!,” we still see examples of him constructing anachronistic space. His textual inclusion and representation of countries in the Orient (Mid-and Far-East) often results in bodies that cling to “primitive” ways--primitive in the sense of adhering to ancient doctrines of religious practice. These practices run against the direction in which the nineteenth-century West moves, with science and technology at the forefront of “civilized” existence. In addition, the lands where the member of the Orient goes about his or her constructed “primitive” existence often appear dark, desolate, and dismal; the bodies and their practices, as well as the *lands* themselves become less of their own equal (and realistic) place in their given textual inclusion. Instead, Whitman’s construction negates these peoples and areas; the inclusion supplements place with a mysterious, separate sphere of anachronistic space; the space that exists outside of Western history and time. It works as a textual inclusion of the past, yet a past that exists almost *beyond* history.

Up to this point, the poet merely lists geographic space, latitude, and longitude. The third section or stanza paragraph marks the shift when the world’s peoples are represented, and thus textually included, in the poem. The persona asks, “What do you hear Walt Whitman?” (3.22), and Whitman proceeds to inform the reader of the sounds before him. The next 18 lines all begin with “I hear,” and as Whitman “hears” each incident, the text sets up a hierarchical list of *whom* and *what* he hears. Included in the list are a “workman singing” (3.23), the “shouts of Australians pursuing the wild horse” (3.25), the “continual echoes from the Thames” (3.27), and “fierce French liberty songs” (3.28). Curiously,

European countries are at the top, and all the sounds emitted from them appear noble, heroic, or romantic. As Whitman “moves” further east, the lively, pleasant, and industrious sounds from the European shift to sounds of ominous foreboding. “I hear the locusts in Syria as they strike the grain and grass with the showers of their terrible clouds” (3.29). While giving Syria a textual presence and inclusion, the presence and inclusion also suggest a displaced anachronistic moment outside of “civilized” time, in which Syria appears void of life and people. The only indication of activity proves that of dark locusts, swarming over the dismal landscape.

Following these lines, the poet then states, “I hear the Coptic refrain toward sundown, pensively falling on the breast of the black venerable vast mother the Nile” (3.31). Again, the depiction of the East creates an essentially unpeopled darkness, as the sun sets over a mysterious land, casting darkness over an equally black Nile River. The “Coptic refrain” trails away into the sunset; the sunset works as a signifier, perhaps, of a voice and people descending into the past, or into the anachronistic space outside of history, as the new day awaits to take the former day’s place. However, eventually people *are* heard; Whitman “hears rhythmic myths of the Greeks, and the strong legends of the Romans” (3.38). Although he includes physical bodies of the Hebrews, Greeks, and Romans, “records,” “psalms,” “myths,” and “legends” all--in their simultaneous textual representation--indicate mere records of days long since passed. The “other’s” *life* earns a spot in the poem, but the *factors* that compose their life suggest a life immersed in archaic fragments. As the reader sees, the textual inclusion in these lines gives a presence, voice, and life to both the European and non-European; however, a more complete textual body and active role represents the peoples of the European countries. They are alive and working in the moment; the non-European countries only contain the occasional static

body--“the Arab muezzin calling from the top of the mosque” (3.33) or “the Hebrew reading his records and psalms” (3.37). There appears a great division between Eastern immobility and Western movement and progression.

Whitman’s inclusion of all cannot exist without the simultaneous binary opposition of East and West--oppositions that create a barrier between the past (East) and present (West). In section three, Schueller also notes an apparent racial hierarchy in these lines, in which the Euro-American reaffirms him or herself:

As we examine the particular geographic space and the specific races mentioned, however, we see that these measured cadences work to unproblematically mystify the racial hierarchies that accompany Whitman’s creation of a polyglot, yet ultimately EuroAmerican, self [. . .] the amative self derives its expansive identity from its survey of ‘unexplored countries’ and the indistinguishable ‘swarms’ of Asian peoples. (181-182)

Schueller’s remarks help show how identity of the Euro-American partially arises from Whitman’s list of sounds pertaining to the “other.” Through the poet or the speaker as medium, the American reader hears the vast bodies outside his or her own scope; Whitman, conducting the non-European’s inclusion (and temporary “celebration”), speaks their sounds in awe and reverence. However, while performing his textual inclusion in the circulation of the world, the sounds (as will sight later in the poem) work to create both a racial and technological gap; this distance shows the Western reader his or her own simultaneous racial and technological superiority.

In sections four through ten, Whitman continues his global illumination and inclusion of both European and non-European countries; the textual surveillance now sees the bodies and activities, instead of merely hearing them. Dana Phillips convincingly

suggests that “one must not only ask why ‘Salut’ takes the shape of a poem and not something else--a geography textbook, for example. One must also ask why Whitman wants to tell us about these so-called ‘savage types’ ”(293). Phillips proceeds to grapple with these questions and soon suggests the reason is “to stereotype them: to identify their ‘species’ and fix them in place, so that they might then be deployed as the relatively stable terms of an implicit comparison” (294). By enacting the representative inclusion that becomes comparison, the poet, as in the earlier sections of the poem, continues to situate the binaries and divisions of East and West.

In addition, the listing of European and non-European sounds becomes another visual hierarchy of sorts. McClintock, borrowing from Foucault, calls this concept “panoptical surveillance” (59). She applies this all-seeing surveillance to the English World Exhibition at the Crystal Palace in 1851. Here, spectators could look at the world’s achievements consolidated under one roof--the “global progress consumed visually in a single image” (58). McClintock goes on to state that “time became global, a progressive accumulation of panoramas and scenes arranged, ordered and catalogued according to the logic of imperial capital” (58). While McClintock’s use of panoptical surveillance refers to English imperial industrialization, her concept can be applied to the global list of sights and sounds that Whitman presents in “Salut au Monde!” Through his panoptical gaze and panoptical inclusion, which--all in one moment--sees and presents the sounds of bodies before him, the vision passes from the poet to the American reader. With Whitman as the medium, the reader can then visibly see all the global sounds (represented by the text) of life before him or her; the poet hands the reader the power of an omniscient, all-seeing and all-hearing presence.

Further in her discussion of panoptical surveillance of the Crystal Palace, McClintock asserts that the British, by presenting such an event, thereby affirm the technological and superior power of English civilization. This idea applies as well to Whitman's panoptical surveillance of the world. By including the sounds and life of the world before him, he can textually bridge the gap between American and non-American or non-European. His textual inclusion can then provide a sort of poetic unity between Self and Other. However, Whitman includes "others" in the wide scope of his gaze to simultaneously privilege the ultimate American position of democratic evolution, global expansion, and overall accomplishment; the reader, all in one moment, can see the lesser and fuller developed peoples and countries. The panoptical surveillance ultimately benefits the American position, as it does with British imperial industrialism. In the hierarchy of surveillance, Europe's sounds are at the top, while non-European sounds of the Mid and Far East are lower on the scale. In this global inclusion that indicates binaries of East and West, America (as are the British at the Crystal Palace) serves as the privileged term of opposition.

In "Salut au Monde!," the world's waterways work as a highway for the delivery and exchange of goods; the sea and oceans provide a new course for the extension of commodities into far-reaching places. Whitman states, "I behold the sail and steamships of the world, some in clusters in port, some on their voyages" (4.66). He then goes on to note the presence and circulation of steamships *everywhere*, from "the gulf of Mexico" (4.69) to "the straits of Dover" (4.70) to "the Niger or the Congo" (4.75). The reader, because of the lengthy, repetitive list, almost hypnotically internalizes location after location; the lines work to incessantly instill the seemingly endless deliveries and exchanges. Thus, the world's ports become a global marketplace for the consumption of nineteenth-century commodities.

Whitman does not say who is conducting the transporting; deliverers, recipients, and products are left out. It seems fair to say, however, that the Western powers of Europe, and to a lesser degree, America, are primarily responsible--due to increased Western economic expansion during the mid-to-late nineteenth-century. The many references to African countries, especially the "Congo," hint at the British empire's quest for rubber and ivory; these resources are extracted to benefit the Westerner's needs. Some of the many other areas textually included undoubtedly suggest America's own growing economic expansion. The biased textual inclusion here is done so to, again, ultimately privilege the Westerner. The circulation of delivering and receiving shows the Western reader how the rest of the world "benefits" from commodities and goods; products produced by the most technologically and economically advanced powers. At the same time, the privileging also stems from the textual reassurance that the West *has* the economic strength and superiority *to* extend and penetrate *into* the rest of the world. Here, we see further instances of panoptical time, with the West hosting the worldwide shopping spree.

Sections five and six of "Salut au Monde!" show the poet, in his textual surveillance, branching out to next explore technological advancement. Whitman announces:

I see the tracks of the railroads of the earth,
 I see them in Great Britain, I see them in Europe,
 I see them in Asia and Africa.
 I see the electric telegraphs of the earth (5.79-82)

A first reading of these lines may lead one to believe that Whitman here celebrates equality through technological advancement; the world unites and connects through nineteenth-century achievement. Yet, the reader must remember that sight and surveillance transmits through the Euro-American's "eye." The poet textually includes distant sites such as Asia

and Africa, not to expose *their* technological equality, but instead to illuminate the far areas and boundaries that Western achievement has penetrated. The telegraph wires buzz Western messages around the world; the railroad tracks, as does the water for the ships, carry trains that deliver and receive more products in Asia and Africa. We must be reminded of Asa Whitney's comment regarding the world's "benefit" and "enjoyment" of American or Western achievement. The poet's textual inclusion represents the "other" countries, but the inclusion undermines itself by his boasting of the American and European infiltration; in a sense, these areas are only "worthy" of inclusion if they are sights and locations that are "benefited" and "bettered" by the West's technological penetration.

In the 1855 preface to *Leaves of Grass*, Whitman argues, "to him [the poet] the other continents arrive as contributions [. . .] he gives them reception for their sake and his own sake" (713). If the other continents "arrive" contributing to America's greatness, then there is the idea that this is one of their primary missions. Yet, it seems that Western technological and economic infiltration has "arrived" in far-reaching countries; the countries have not come to America with their contributions. His preface and his poem simultaneously suggest that these countries *ask for* and *need* representation by the dominant American or Western voice. By representing the American global expansion, Whitman, in his "reception," shows how textually included areas such as Asia and Africa are not themselves benefited, but ultimately how these countries benefit America; they are geographic sites that occupy and simultaneously embody the achievements of the West. In "Can the Subaltern Speak?," Gayatri Spivak argues that, "a group of countries, generally first-world, are in the position of investing capital; another group, generally third-world, *provide the field for investment*" (83, emphasis mine). Spivak's words seem echoed in Whitman's, when he speaks of the "other continents" as "contributions"; the "contributions" translate

into America's "investment." I would suggest, however, that Asia's and Africa's contributions are empty. They contain, in Whitman's eyes, a blankness and emptiness on their own accord; they cannot serve as active "contributions" until their empty spaces are filled by Western technological and capitalistic advancement. On its own, the country--without American or Western influence--holds a lesser ability and worth. With U.S. influence, the country finally "arrives" as a "contribution." Its contribution works more as a (re)affirmation of America's potential, superiority, and dominant influence. Whitman, especially in *Democratic Vistas*, tends to hold contradictory views of capitalism; sometimes capitalism and investment work as the answer to America's greatness; other times, the infatuation with capitalism serves as the cause of the country's moral downfall. In "Salut au Monde!," however, the idea of global trade and distribution seems to take on the former implication.

On some levels, textual inclusion of "all" attempts to deal with the historical nineteenth-century paradox of American democratic diversity versus a collective, whole Uniformity. Throughout "Salut au Monde!," the "other" countries are spoken of in reverence and in these moments, the reader sees the poet grappling with the paradox on paper. Yet, Doris Sommer notes the limits of diversity in Whitman's rhetoric. In *Proceed with Caution, When Engaged in Minority Writing in the Americas* (1999), she argues, "Whitman's America is 'national by subtraction,' to borrow Roberto Schwarz's irony about an ideal Brazil, because immigrants and natives leave their differences behind to enter Whitman's inclusive catalogues" (37). Leaving difference behind serves as another biased purpose in Whitman's textual inclusion; in order to "join" America, difference must transcend into a united American sameness. As we have seen, the text's attempt at celebrating differences of "others" tends to contain itself because of the biased purposes. In erasing difference and

attempting a textual global unity of sameness, Whitman, who understandably cannot define an American sameness—at least not until *Democratic Vistas*--can therefore only fall back on textual global difference. Phillips argues, “Whitman cannot point to any obvious, undebatable examples of The American—not in the same way he can point to clear examples of The Other, like the Austral Negro or the Feejeeman” (302). Using the poem to attempt to work out the real-life problem of a united American identity, Whitman still cannot move past the problem in the text.

The paradox that Whitman struggles with nevertheless contains itself at the end, where the poem indicates simultaneous globalization and “American separation”—with America at the forefront. This idea then places Whitman historically within the realms of nineteenth-century expansionism and imperialism; the poem is a direct parallel of the movement, and not an aesthetic or spiritual celebration of the world’s differences. In *Empire for Liberty: Melville and the Poetics of Individualism* (1989), Wai-chee Dimock argues, “his [Melville’s] authorship enlists the sovereignty of both self and nation—both the freedom of the former and dominion of the latter—to bring forth [. . .] a figure whose literary individualism is always imperially articulated” (8). Dimock’s statement holds true for Whitman as well. His individual yet collective “whole” of the world--embodied in his global circulation--cannot look at the world’s differences and cultural diversity without viewing them through the lens of Western or American expansionism and superiority. This lens thus prevents any kind of equal joining and assimilation of All.

In section eleven of “Salut au Monde!,” each line begins with “You”; here, Whitman again sets up an all-inclusive list of bodies and peoples. In another hierarchy-like display, European peoples such as “You Norwegian! Swede! Dane!” (11.166) and “You sturdy Austrian!” (11.171) are at the top of the list; further down are “You Chinaman and

Chinawoman of China!" (11.180) and "You Jew journeying in your old age" (11.182). Many are included in the list that goes on for almost two pages. Finally, instead of an actual invitation to come join the collective Body of America, Whitman merely shouts--after two pages of "inclusion"--"Health to you! good will to you all, from me and America sent!" (11.194). The statement might read as a considerate and noble gesture, as does much of the poem. However, the consideration as inclusion lessens when the inclusion of the "other" reveals evolutionary and racial difference, as we will see in his depiction of the African. In addition, Whitman's above statement verbally reaffirms the distance and subordination he has set up despite the global inclusion. Here, the line wishes the foreign countries well, in terms of "health" and "good will," but there is no invitation to *bring* the "health," "good will," and actual bodies within America's borders. Whitman goes on to note that "each of us [is here] with his or her right upon the earth" (11.196). He then furthers the idea by transcending actual geographic space by using such words as "eternal" and "divinely." In moving from geography to a divine, limitless sphere, Whitman can hedge past the fact that his actual textual inclusion still creates boundaries and borders of exclusion; his positive salutations simultaneously situate themselves with the "other" peoples *in* these distant countries, and not *within* America's borders. Interjecting these particular words allows him to ignore the geographic boundaries and oppositions he has set up.

Section twelve continues with the list, where the large majority of bodies addressed as "You" are those of non-European descent. Whitman notes the "wooly-hair'd hordes" (147.199) of the Africans, and then continues with "You human *forms* with the fathomless ever-impressive countenances of *brutes*" (147.201, emphasis mine). "Forms" suggests a husk or fragment of a human, more or less implying that the *form* is not quite *human*; perhaps "form" represents the displaced anachronistic space, where the undeveloped or degenerated

“other” resides. In addition, “brute” contains its own inhuman-like and primitive qualities that reside outside of Western time and history. It appears quite literally that the African cannot fit Whitman’s picture of a teleological, progressive Body, try as he might. As Whitman notes the “wooly-hair’d hordes,” he also addresses the “plague-swarms in Madras, Nankin, Kaubul, Cairo!” (147.207). The poet often speaks of the non-European in terms of large groups, in “swarms,” as if the large numbers of “primitive” bodies work together to make up one perhaps closer in equivalence to that of the American or European.

After his comments toward the African, and the notation of “swarms” in the Orient, the poet then states one of the most important (and problematic) lines of the poem: “I do not say one word against you *away back there where you stand*, / (You will *come forward* in due time to *my side*)” (12.210-211, emphases mine). Here, the ideas of evolutionary advancement and Darwinian concepts are clearly expressed. As Phillips argues:

In these lines this classificatory scheme is historicized. A vision of The Other is projected into the past (or ‘away back there’), and what appear to be crude racial stereotypes now becomes examples of the poet’s evolutionary optimism.

The Austral Negro, the Berber, the Patagonian, the FeeJeeman, and many others suddenly appear to occupy different rungs [. . .] on the evolutionary ladder—which means, of course, both that they are (for the time being) his inferiors but also that they will not always be so. (300)

Phillips’ insights are important in this case, especially in the idea that less capable peoples are “projected into the past” or into anachronistic space. She also notes that Whitman seems hopeful in the idea of a one-day racial equivalence. It is safe to suggest that this may be so; this statement might serve as the call to joining the dynamic present of the modern world—of which America serves as the leader. However, if this *is* a call to join, it is not a call

situated in the present, but rather in the future. In *Walt Whitman's Concept of the American Common Man* (1955), Leadie Clark notes:

That Whitman was fascinated by exaggerations in physiognomy and differences in color is evident. That these differences kept even the poet from recognizing anything other than the equal divinity of souls is also obvious. Whitman was forced to conclude that only in due time could he accept these black tribes as equals. For the present, these groups must be satisfied in knowing that 'I do not prefer others so very much before you either.' (71)

While the present country of America is still in its infant stage, the possibility of non-European inclusion and assimilation seems impossible. First, the racial differences must first be more developed, and then somehow put aside, as Sommer and Clark note. In addition, if the non-European *does* come to Whitman's side, he or she will have to adhere, as Phillips puts it, "to the model that *he* [Whitman] provides" (300). The model, of course, serves as the textual inclusion of "Salut au Monde!" In conforming to the American model that Phillips notes, the "contributions" that serve the American interest will ultimately involve--in Darwinian development and "improvement"--the erasing of non-European identity and cultural difference, thus failing to create a new and different America. Assimilation and joining Whitman's side will require a leaving of diversity and ethnicity behind--perhaps in the past or anachronistic space, where the vitality of America does not reside. However, these speculations move into realms that have not yet occurred in the textual present of the poem.

If Whitman considers the possibility of real-life non-European inclusion and assimilation into America, he nevertheless contains the possibility in the poem's closing lines. The speaker announces, "Toward you all, in America's name, / I raise high the

perpendicular hand, *I make the signal, / To remain after me in sight forever*" (13.223-225, emphasis mine). These statements seemingly undo the possibility of American and non-American or non-European unity, as the "other" permanently resides away ("after") the speaker "forever." Yet, the "other" stays in a position that lets America conduct its Statue of Liberty-like visual surveillance. In addition, it allows America and the West to penetrate globally with Western technologies and commodities--yet still from this space of distance. Influence and expansion are a Western privilege, where one opposition may reach out, but the other opposition must stay static and distanced. Whitman's usage of "forever" realistically prevents the possibility of "racial equivalence" that Phillips and I have considered. The poet's friendly overtones, the textual inclusion of "all," and the wishes of good tidings all subvert--while simultaneously containing--the binaries of American and non-American, European and non-European. The subversion momentarily allows a brief poetic mixing of all races and creeds, perhaps an ahistorical instance of panoptical time; these subversions allow Whitman to attempt to move past the real-life problems he struggles with concerning American and Western identity. Yet, binaries and divisions, however blurred in the textual circulation, always underlie and ultimately structure and organize the global field of hierarchies--with America at the top.

As my readings of the poems suggest, when Whitman deals with the future of America--especially in Manifest Destiny within U.S. borders and the global expansion outside--he often winds up erasing and excluding those whom he supposedly "celebrates." My intent has been to show how Whitman's textual inclusion of the "other"--whether Native American, European, or non-European foreigner--always leads, in different forms, to an exclusion of the "other." This exclusion both gives space for the expansionist to fill, as well as provides the distance needed for America to claim its superiority. I have traced

Whitman's movement across the United States and ended it with his gaze upon the entire world. In "Salut au Monde!," textual inclusion of the world's "others" ultimately reaffirms Western difference from the world. In addition, the inclusion and representation show "other" countries and peoples both inside and outside the past; in any case, either position inside or outside of history does not run parallel to America. These factors, along with textual illumination of hierarchies (capitalistic, racial and Darwinian) all lead to an overall implication of the "other" countries' lesser abilities against the West, while at the same time serving as a distanced exhibit *for* the West. Now, as I turn to *Democratic Vistas*, we will see Whitman re-shift his focus back upon the American.

Chapter Four

Democratic Vistas: Re-writing and Repositioning the Euro-American “Other”

Thus we presume to write, as it were, upon things that exist not, and
travel by maps yet unmade, and a blank.

—Walt Whitman, *Democratic Vistas*

Looking at *Democratic Vistas*, Whitman’s major prose statement, through the particular lens of the poems, we see this historical, political essay reveal similar functions of erasure and exclusion—but this time, the poet includes-to-exclude the Euro-American. Yet, unlike the case of the American Indians, whose textual exclusion reflects historical, actual disappearances, Whitman’s tactic of inclusion now suggests a fantasy, or more specifically, an underlying *desire* to erase the current Euro-American. The “other” in this case works a

bit differently; it is not a human being separate from the Euro-American self, as are the Native Americans and non-European foreigners. Instead, the “other” is a “fallen” Euro-American product which contrasts Whitman’s idealized vision of the perfect Euro-American. Thus, there is a split between what Whitman expects of his countrymen, and what he actually sees before him; the “fallen,” contemporary Euro-American in a sense becomes, in the poet’s mind, an “other.” On one level, *Democratic Vistas* serves as a “State of the Union” address; Whitman merely illustrates the “problems” of the Euro-American in order to attempt to fix them. However, on another level, his textual moves in the essay still suggest a underlying current of erasure and exclusion in regard to his and America’s “other.” He, perhaps unconsciously, again posits an empty space so that his projected vision remains alive and feasible. Although exclusion of the “other” proves realistically impossible, *because* the “other” is still an extension of the Euro-American, we still see the fantasy and desire of erasure come through in the poet’s textual performance.

Whitman’s dominant pessimism in *Democratic Vistas* largely stems from the fractured country--the North and South--during and after the Civil War. As I mentioned in the analysis of “Salut au Monde!,” America’s economic expansion abroad visibly increased in the years following the war. Yet, the poet largely does not concentrate on the activities to the south of America and overseas; he focuses his attention on the situations occurring within his own country. Instead of a nation united in idealism and vision, Whitman saw a land and people conflicted over what was best for America’s present and future. His one hero during the Civil War was Abraham Lincoln. In *Whitman the Political Poet* (1989), Betsy Erkkila states, “to Whitman, Lincoln represented a return to revolutionary principles” (191). When Lincoln was assassinated in April of 1865, his death only added to Whitman’s growing pessimism. Erkkila goes on to note that Whitman viewed “Lincoln’s assassination

as a black horror, a demonically charged darkness blocking the nation's democratic vista" (227). First, the country's internal conflicts set it into a slump, and now the American leader's death only added to the landslide. Finally, the war seemed to send the American peoples' ethics, spiritual principles, and physical appearances into an ugly, downward spiral. All these factors contributed to Whitman's attitude toward his country and countrymen.

Democratic Vistas works as propaganda, much like "From Far Dakota's Cañons," but without such outright imperialist rhetoric. Whitman supplies another textual construction in order to bring about a change in America during the 1860s and 1870s. On a related note, the essay works, again like "From Far Dakota's Cañons," to keep America moving toward its idealized, united vision in the wake of dark and dismal times. Luke Mancuso points out the function of the poet's rhetoric:

because such a reconstructive task lay in his own representative syntax, Whitman had to compose a syntactical 'skeleton' which would perform the cultural work of binding up the competing factions [. . .] his federalizing transaction had to be contained in language, so that the representative poet and the Congressional representatives were both articulating rhetorical strategies for reconstructing a composite identity. (231)

In similar fashion, Barry Maxwell notes that, "One vital move of *Democratic Vistas*, then, is to maintain and build investor confidence in the 'stock' of the United States, imperiled as the confidence was by the experience of the civil war, and the widespread doubt regarding the viability of the American enterprise" (87). While Mancuso and Maxwell are both correct in their assumptions, Whitman's textual practices simultaneously work similarly to the poems, excluding and erasing as they attempt to "fix" the Euro-American Self.

In *Imagined Empires: Incas, Aztecs, and the New World of American Literature, 1771-1876* (1999), Eric Wertheimer discusses the idea of absence as pertinent to literary constructions of American empire:

It is the recesses that the absence generates where Whitman is forced to confront the ideological problems of his otherwise ardently inclusive historical and national vision, which is to say that New World history projected for Whitman yet another paradox of the national imaginary [. . .] And if history is haunted by the binaries upon which American identity is founded, then it is haunted too by absence. The absence underwrites and trails Whitman's democratic American identity and the print culture that charts it. (162-163)

Wertheimer's argument works in *Democratic Vistas*, but the idea of desire and lack seems to fuel all of Whitman's nationalist and democratic works. As I mentioned in the introduction, the poems position us to read Whitman's famous political essay. This is not to lessen the importance of his treatment of non-European "others"; I might add that the idea also works in reverse: we can read *Democratic Vistas* in such a way as to prepare us for how the poet views non-European "others" that do not live up to his ideal standards. Whatever the order in which we choose to read his texts, it is crucial to assert again that the important link between the poetry and prose lies in the idea of exclusion and erasure, whether historically reflective or in personal desire. In order for Whitman to construct a progressive American identity in the poems, he must exclude and erase both the individual and various groups of non-European "others"; the space left creates the potential for the idealistic, collective American future. Yet, as *Democratic Vistas* makes clear, the present, "fallen" Euro-American filling the space proves not the idealized Euro-American Whitman originally imagined.

All along, Whitman's poetic intentions have been to create--sometimes without clear definition--a democratic, collective American identity. Now, in *Democratic Vistas*, he attempts to *define* a united identity. What the poet, a little more than 20 years before his death, realistically sees before him is not a group identity, but instead a fractured mess of individuals, united only by physical deformities and corruption. While this disappointing outcome might appear as the end of his textual idealization, the state of the "fallen" Euro-American only serves as a temporary obstruction to the Ideal Euro-American. However, because of the similar underlying impulse to exclude or erase--motifs that by now should prove recognizably clear in many of Whitman's texts--he once again can articulate his democratic, progressive, ideal America of the future. As Wertheimer implies, that which Whitman has before him simultaneously indicates that what he does not have. And yet, I would argue, the absence works to Whitman's advantage: because of the lack of his visionary, ideal America, Whitman has--through the exclusion of textual inclusion--another blank slate and space in which to fill *with* his united, collective America. The exclusion and erasure keep the democratic teleology forever moving.

In my earlier chapters, I traced three forms of textual inclusion: blatant imperialism, elegiac naturalization, and global subordination. *Democratic Vistas* uses another form of naturalization in its textual inclusion; this time, however, without the elegy. Whitman makes repeated references to the idea that a perfect, democratic, idealized American body and identity proves inevitable. Because he and America are a part of the "other," Whitman cannot *permanently* exclude the Euro-American "other" in the same fashion as he does with the Native American or non-European. Instead, he places the "fallen" Euro-American on a lower-level hierarchy that is subordinate to the Ideal, much as in "Salut au Monde!" In due time, the "fallen" Euro-American will come to Whitman's side. He does, however, have a

solution that will inevitably fix the problem: “Democracy too is law, and of the strictest, amplest kind [. . .] Law is the unshakeable order of the universe forever: and the law over all, and law of laws, is the law of successions: that of the superior law, in time, gradually supplanting and overwhelming the inferior one” (*Specimen* 219). Again, the poet’s Darwinian ideology and rhetoric surfaces; before, where it was used to naturalize the disappearance of the “weaker” Native American, it now legitimizes and affirms that his ideal, democratic utopia still lingers on the horizon. Later in the essay, he states that when democracy has “with imperial power, through amplest time [. . .] dominated mankind,” it will have “fashion’d, systematized, and triumphantly finish’d and carried out, in its own interest, and with unparallel’d success, a new earth and a new man” (227). The naturalized inevitability of a someday, united democratic existence lingers within Whitman’s rhetoric; the possibility thus does not entirely split the cord between “fallen” and Ideal. Yet, at the same time, “a new earth and a new man” suggest the *new* results from the space *created* by erasure and exclusion. The fantasy, however unrealistic, lingers within his address to the nation.

When Whitman addresses the Euro-American, he enacts--as he does in “Salut au Monde!”--another panoptical, all-seeing surveillance. He declares, “I say we had best look our times and lands searchingly in the face, like a physician diagnosing some deep disease. Never was there, perhaps, more hollowness at heart then at present, and here in the United States”(210). He then takes it upon himself to adapt the role as the doctor, both diagnosing the sickness and prescribing the cure. In another all-sweeping surveillance that compacts America into a single moment, Whitman tells his reader to use “the moral microscope upon humanity” (212). Part of the propaganda in the essay, it seems, is to not only point out the problem, but to also perhaps make the reader aware of his or her *own* deficiencies; the

panopticon of the microscope includes all, but also dimly reflects the image of the viewer's eye (and life) in the circumference of the lens.

Whitman then asks, "Are there, indeed, *men* here worthy the name? Are there athletes? Are there perfect women, to match the generous material luxuriance? Are there crops of fine youths, and majestic old persons?" (212). He goes on to note that "a sort of flat Sahara appears, these cities, crowded with petty grotesques, phantoms, playing meaningless antics" (212). His idealized vision lingers at the outset of the passage, instead of the end of the passage or poem--such as the "new" settler in "Song of the Redwood-Tree." Yet, subsequent to the projected vision lies the current degeneration. Before Whitman can propose his "cure," he must further critique--perhaps unconsciously textually include--the current deficiencies of the Euro-American "other." He asks his reader to:

Confess that everywhere, in shop, street, church, theatre, bar-room, official chair, are pervading flippancy and vulgarity, low cunning, infidelity—everywhere the youth puny, impudent, foppish, prematurely ripe—everywhere an abnormal libidinousness, unhealthy forms, male, female, painted, padded, dyed, chignon'd, muddy complexions, bad blood, the capacity for good motherhood decreasing or deceas'd, shallow notions of beauty, with a range of manners, or rather lack of manners, (considering the advantages enjoy'd,) probably the meanest to be seen in the world. (212)

The passage sounds very different from the burly, thriving settlers he creates in "Song of the Redwood-Tree." Dana Phillips makes clear that "this failure of the democratic experiment to produce a new, healthier, and better-looking body politic [. . .] is something Whitman cannot accept" (315). Yet, in Whitman's inclusive passage lies the beginnings of a solution. The naturalized inevitability of improvement--the idea that Whitman associates

with democracy and law--indeed seems to reside just below the textual usage of "puny," "impudent," "prematurely ripe," "abnormal," "unhealthy," "muddy," "bad blood," "deceasing," and so on. Because the progression of law and democracy naturally produces strong individuals, as Whitman argues earlier, the above list of undesirable traits illustrates the split, but not complete severance, between the "fallen" Euro-American "other" and the Ideal Euro-American. Teleology will fix the problems of the present.

As if he has not already made his point, Whitman once more makes the reader aware that "I myself see clearly enough the crude, defective streaks in all the strata of the common people; the specimens and vast collections of the ignorant, the credulous, the unfit and uncouth, the incapable, and the very low and poor" (218). Again, the doctor has placed his "specimens and vast collections" under the all-seeing "moral microscope." As I argued in the introduction, Whitman's texts serve as his contribution to creating an ideal, progressive America. He proceeds to thus use his textual contribution to spur the government "to develop, to open up to cultivation, to encourage the possibilities of all beneficent and manly outcropping" (218). Whitman uses his textual propaganda to now not only insist that American human improvement is necessary and inevitable, but also to suggest that the government itself shares a responsibility in helping the naturalized "series of laws" of democracy flourish.

Up to this point, the poet has merely critiqued the current status of the failed--in his opinion--Euro-American. His first priority always rests with the Euro-American; he has worked hard in *Leaves of Grass* to carve out a space for him or her. Now that the American society has not lived up to his standards, Whitman's attention again rests with them. Part of a critique, it seems, is to offer a suggestion in how to fix the problem. Thus, he states, "I proceed with my speculations, Vistas" (213). If Whitman merely left his essay as a

complaint, the text would prove harder to discuss in the light of inclusion and exclusion. Yet, because he *does* provide an answer, we see the same patterns emerge here as in the poems. The answer, for Whitman, works to lessen the split between the “fallen” Euro-American and the Ideal Euro-American. However, the answer *also* displays the simultaneous fascination with erasure and exclusion; even if *completely* excluding the Euro-American is the furthest thing from his mind.

Whitman now associates and legitimizes American improvement *itself* with science. “We suggest a science as it were of healthy average personalism, on original-universal grounds, the object of which should be to raise up and supply through the States a copious race of superb American men and women, cheerful, religious, ahead of any yet known” (230). In “Song of the Redwood-Tree,” Whitman places the exclusion of the weaker element into the hands of a higher, more inarguable power--namely Darwinian scientific evolution. Science, which legitimizes the inevitability of the expanding settler to fill in the space left by the tree or Native American, now in turn legitimizes the production of Euro-American improvement. Again, because the deciding factor passes into the ultimate hands of science, the poet can push his rhetoric of improvement to the fullest level.

With the science of improvement now intermingled with law and democracy, Whitman proceeds to call his idealization the “democratic ethnology of the future” (232). Switching from the critic to the textual artist, he colors in the idealized answer:

Attempting, then, however crudely, a basic model or portrait of personality
for general use for the manliness of the States [. . .] Parentage must consider
itself in advance. (Will the time hasten when fatherhood and motherhood shall
become a science—and the noblest science?) To our model, a clear-blooded,
strong-fibred physique, is indispensable [. . .] in youth, fresh, ardent, emotional,

aspiring, full of adventure; at maturity, brave, perceptive, under control, neither too talkative nor too reticent, neither flippant or sombre; of the bodily figure, the movements easy, the complexion showing the best blood, somewhat flush'd, breast expanded, an erect attitude, a voice whose sound outvies music, eyes of calm and steady gaze, yet capable also of flashing [. . .] with regard to the mental-educational part of our model, enlargement of intellect, stores of cephalic knowledge. (232)

What we see here is the common pattern of the filled-in space. In reality, Whitman has only provided the ladder for the “fallen” Euro-American to climb up the hierarchy; as a critic, he must suggest some sort of a solution. While the poet here wishes to create a model for his country to achieve, the “recipe” still suggests the overall fascination or desire of erasure and exclusion. In Whitman’s texts, there largely can never be an idealized model without the concurrent dimming or overall erasure of its opponent. Even as he announces an answer for his beloved main priority, the way he does so through his textual performance echoes the tactics he uses in many poems of *Leaves of Grass*.

Whitman’s solution will, to his mind, keep his country and people moving toward the Ideal. Yet, as he takes it upon himself to rejoin the split between the “fallen” Euro-American and the Ideal Euro-American, he has forgotten or ignored the range of physical differences and cultural diversity needed to function in an *actual* democratic, cosmopolitan society. We must be reminded of Doris Sommer’s assertion that “immigrants and natives leave their differences behind to enter Whitman’s inclusive catalogues” (37). And, as Charles Altieri notes:

Any synecdochic grounding for national identity is doubly problematic—in its relying on a single figure that necessarily excludes the range of differences and agonistic tensions constituting the political fabric and in its overall idealizing

of the nation as the locus of collective identification [. . .] he [Whitman] projects a collective what is in fact a single white male perspective, and the projection lies on abstract impersonality insensitive to the temporal and spatial aspects of those contingent loyalties that are in fact fundamental to full subjectivity. (36-37)

Both Sommer's and Altieri's arguments bring up my former point in "Salut au Monde!"--that Whitman envisions the world through a Euro-American lens. In "Salut au Monde!," this function proves problematic, for because of the Eurocentric privileging, non-European "others" are placed at lower levels that are subordinate to America. In *Democratic Vistas*, his own contemporary American--the American he has always privileged and paved a way for--is also now, on one hand, subordinate to the envisioned Ideal. On the other hand, while the subordination will last only until the "fallen" Euro-American climbs up to his Ideal, the textual manner in which the poet prescribes the subordination also suggests the temporary Euro-American erasure and exclusion. His impulse and fascination lingers even within the text of *Democratic Vistas*. My point here is that Whitman's "celebrated" subjects of his texts--whether non-European or Euro-American--often end up compromising his utopian, democratic, but ultimately unrealistic vision.

However, the poet's privileging always remains with the Euro-American, whether he or she proves "fallen" or Ideal. Toward the end of *Democratic Vistas*, Whitman spurs his reader to realize that:

Long ere the second centennial arrives, there will be some forty to fifty great States, among them Canada and Cuba. When the present century closes, our population will be sixty or seventy millions. The Pacific will be ours, and the Atlantic mainly ours. There will be daily electric communication with every part of the globe. What an age! What a land! Where, elsewhere, one so great? The

individuality of one nation must then, as always, lead the world. Can there be any doubt who the leader ought to be? (247).

The propaganda, as always, works to keep the teleology in motion. In the interest of bringing the “fallen” Euro-American to his side, Whitman does not stop there. At another point, he prophesies, “It seems as if the Almighty had spread before this nation charts of imperial destinies [. . .] You said in your soul, I will be empire of empires, overshadowing all else, past and present, putting the history of old-world dynasties, conquests behind me [. . .] making a new history, a history of democracy, making old history a dwarf” (255). The latter quote declares America’s past, and the former indicates America’s future. However, we have seen Whitman’s treatment of “others,” both outside of America’s borders and within. Exclusion and erasure of the non-European “other” pulls America away from the lesser, archaic and mythical realms of history and the past, hurtling the progressive country forward into the future. In relation, exclusion and subordination of the “fallen” Euro-American “other” keeps the country moving toward the Ideal. In a time period as turbulent and unstable as the American nineteenth-century, I would argue that seeing the actual endpoint, or result, for Whitman, is perhaps more frightening than projecting it safely in the future. Democracy and a united community are perhaps easier to textually construct and endorse when they realistically do not exist. Thus his continual textual impulse to include and then exclude: the exclusion and erasure keep the Ideal textual vision alive. Whitman’s above quotes, as well as the majority of his texts that construct a shape, form, and identity of America, cannot serve as ideal representations of the future without the “others”—those opposite of his Ideal—excluded, erased, or subordinate in the present. Having watched him move across the country, around the world, and then return home, one cannot help but

wonder if he will ever *not* find an “other” that compromises his national vision. Perhaps, as I have suggested, seeing the “other” serves as Whitman’s utmost wish.

Conclusion

In a study of Whitman and exclusion in the light of nation-building, we must lastly consider how still “others” fit into the poet’s vision of a progressive America. This discussion has largely focused on his treatment of American Indians and non-European foreigners, but other peoples still deserve attention. I have freely used the term “Euro-American” to suggest a “stock”--to coin a phrase from Whitman himself--embodiment of an “ideal” American. The term “Euro-American,” especially in America’s relatively young stages during the nineteenth-century, refers to a direct connection with European origin. Although Whitman, as well as his parents, were all born in New York, his family lineage can be traced back to both English and Dutch ancestors (Reynolds 9-11).

However, for the poet, a “stock,” true American was a person born in the United States. In the span of the nineteenth-century, waves of immigrants arrived at America’s eastern shores. Between 1845 and 1855, 3 million foreigners arrived in the country; in 1854 alone, 427,833 were counted (151). As I have repeatedly stated, the range in differences—whether European or non-European—would truly make up a progressive, cosmopolitan society; yet Whitman held a rather intense hatred for foreigners, especially the Irish-Catholic. In a March 17, 1842 article for the *New York Aurora*, the poet writes about a mass of Irish immigrants who arrive at a meeting regarding the New York Public Schools. He calls them “the lowest class of foreigners” who are “so gross an insult to our rights as Americans”; he then moves on to describe the Irish as “Bands of filthy wretches, whose very touch was offensive to a decent man [. . .] disgusting objects bearing the form human [. . .] with shrieks, loud blasphemy, and howlings in their hideous native tongue” (*Collected* 57). We see, in this article, outright, blatant indictments of the European “other.” Whitman’s concentration on physical characteristic—such as “form” apparently representing a “human,” as well as loud, guttural “shrieks”—works as an early parallel to the notations of inequality and incapability that we have seen in the poems.

Also, in another March 1842 *Aurora* article, Whitman writes that:

There are a thousand dangerous influences operating among us—influences whose tendency is to assimilate this land in thought, in social customs, and, to a degree, in government, with the moth eaten systems of the old world. Aurora is imbued with a deadly hatred to all these influences; she wages open, heavy, and incessant war against them. (cited in Kaplan 103)

While he does not directly name “these influences,” we can easily see that they are immigrants who have come from the “old world,” a distant place separate from America. I

have included “Salut au Monde!” as arguably a “separatist” poem, but we can hear Whitman’s above statement echoed in many of Whitman’s “native American” (Euro-American, that is) poems. It seems logical to assert that as Whitman wishes to construct a country separate from European culture, art, political systems, customs, and so on, his attitudes to European foreigners go hand in hand with this separation; after all, the *people* are responsible for making all the above components of Europe occur. The immigrants, too, are responsible for bringing these components with them to America. Reynolds points out that “Whitman extended a friendly hand to foreigners in his poems” (152). The poet’s “friendliness” suggests his customary, all-encompassing self, and also perfectly represents the contradictions--admitted by Whitman himself--that lie within his work. As I have argued, however, all “others” have a temporary place in his texts; nonetheless, the European foreigner, much like the rest of the “others,” will eventually have to prove subordinate to or disappear from the ideal American project.

Whitman also held mixed, and often ambiguous views regarding blacks and slavery. This topic deserves elaborate space and attention, far more than will be possible here. The poet, as a journalist, wrote a number of articles denouncing the spread of slavery in the United States. In *Leaves of Grass*, he often *included* representations of slavery: the run-away slave narrative in “Song of Myself”; the slave auction in “I Sing the Body Electric”; and the slave known as Lucifer in “The Sleepers.” Whitman also makes mention of black women in his poems, such as the elderly female emancipated slave in “Ethiopia Saluting the Colors.” In less admirable moments, he refers to the “Hottentot with clicking palate!” in “Salut au Monde!” (12.199). Until recently, Whitman has been associated with his acceptance of blacks, and his hatred for slavery. Yet, Ed Folsom points out that “over the course of his career, Whitman seems to have espoused the full spectrum of nineteenth-century white

American racist views” (“Whitman” 47). During his journalist career, the poet himself adopted a Free-Soil stance, accepting slavery in the States where it existed, but at the same time hoping that it would not extend into the West (Folsom 46). This sort of “middle-ground” position between abolitionist and pro-slavery allowed Whitman to hold mixed, and as we have seen, often contradictory views regarding blacks. Jerome Loving mentions that:

Because Whitman was a ‘free-soiler’ instead of an abolitionist, his attitudes toward slavery and toward blacks were still (and remained throughout his life) two different subjects. Whereas he was appalled by the concept of slavery, he was described by friends during and after the Civil War as less than enthusiastic about freed slaves’ chances of contributing to America’s progress.

(128)

Whitman’s concern in regards to the extension of slavery had less to do with the plight of the black, and more to do with the fact that the ideology of slavery hindered his concept of an ideal, progressive America. Betsy Erkkila sums it up best, stating, “[the] individual and nation were in a state of uncertainty and fragmentation, a state that was in part a product of increasing instability in the political and economic sphere as a result of the slavery controversy” (49). Like the death of Lincoln, the institution of slavery was one more obstacle that blocked America’s “democratic vista.”

Although scholars such as Martin Klammer have traced Whitman’s changing views towards blacks and slavery throughout his life, it appears, as Folsom mentions, that he remained fairly consistent in his overall views regarding blacks and their position in America. In the late 1850s, Whitman worked as an editor at the *Brooklyn Daily Times*. He wrote an opinion piece, in support of the Oregon Constitution, which prohibited blacks from entering the state. Whitman argues:

Who believes that the Whites and Blacks can ever amalgamate in America?

Or who wishes it to happen? Nature has set an impassable seal against it.

Besides, is not America for the Whites? And is it not better so? As long as the Blacks remain here how can they become anything like an independent and heroic race? There is no chance for it. (cited in Erkkila 150)

With Whitman's reference to "Nature," we hear further legitimization reminiscent of the poems. As he evokes the Darwinian rhetoric of a power beyond mankind to justify the American Indian incapability of contribution and assimilation, he again uses "Nature" to legitimize the natural exclusion of blacks from a progressive body of America. This article, representative of the poet's views at the beginning of his 40s, sounds parallel to his comments--regarding blacks and slavery--at the end of his life. We must remember his comment to Traubel that the "nigger, like the Injun" will eventually disappear. In 1891, a year before his death, Whitman made similar comments regarding the black, stating that "the horror of slavery was not in what it did for the nigger but in what it produced of the whites"; in addition, he claimed, "niggers are the happiest people on the earth because they're so damned vacant" (cited in Folsom, "Whitman" 81). If the poet indeed went back and forth in his life over the situation of the slave or the free black in America, at the end, he apparently still remained unconvinced of the black's capability in the progressive America.

All the "others" I have considered--the American Indian, the non-European foreigner, the European foreigner, and the black--all deserve even more attention than what I have attempted in this discussion. Yet another topic further opens up the conversation of inclusion and exclusion in Whitman's America: the role of women. Betsy Erkkila praises Whitman for encouraging American women to step away from their oppressive, traditional

roles; he pushes them to achieve literary endeavors equal to or beyond men. However, both *Leaves of Grass* and *Democratic Vistas* often tend to re-position women *back into* traditional and limited roles, as he numerous times calls for women to serve as a breed of “perfect Mothers”; their “new” role requires them to churn out the Ideal race that he envisions. As any “other,” we must consider how textual inclusion of women, and their “celebration,” eventually collides with his primary goal of creating a perfect America.

As I have suggested, and as recent scholarship clearly proves, the idea of the poet as an expansionist is not a particularly “new” topic in Whitman studies. Perhaps even more so than the large body of work centered on Whitman and gender studies/queer theory, this topic opens up even further possibilities and ways to read and discuss him. There are many, many sides to Whitman the writer and Whitman the man, and an entire book, or more, is necessary in order to properly do justice to all of his conflicting emotions and angles. Although the poet as an expansionist serves as perhaps the most recent train of thought in scholarship, it perhaps should serve as the base of *all* Whitman studies. It seems that all of his sides--his ability to “celebrate” those outside of the Euro-American body; his ability to celebrate love and sex between men as well as women; and his ability to view the world as a part of an interconnected Whole--simultaneously becomes more complex when his texts *do not* in fact encompass All, but actual exclude key portions of humanity. A study of the poet in the light of inclusion into the American ideal vision suddenly causes us to re-think all the other, “inclusive” sides. I would argue, in closing, that this “newest” way to study Whitman must receive further treatment; if we are to view him as the poet of Democracy, as a poet of the people, we must seriously consider how a large percentage of people are left out of the very narrow and limited definition of an ideal People. This forces us, perhaps unwillingly, to reconsider his all-loving and all-accepting reputation. However, as Whitman works an

individual directly linked with the larger picture of building a powerful and dominant nation, we must use him therefore in larger contexts; we must consider how our nation historically has created its identity of America while concurrently excluding “others” from the present and future. An analysis of Whitman, or any key nineteenth-century literary figure, ultimately calls into question even bigger and more important considerations. As America continues forward into the twenty-first century, even amid the threat of terrorism both from within and abroad, we must not only look at our constructions and ideologies of the present, but also of the constructions and ideologies of the past that have helped shape and formulate our country today.

Notes

¹It is very unlikely that Osceola's wife was present at his death, as she is in the poem, since Kenny notes that she was sold into slavery.

² Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States, 1492-Present, Revised and Updated Edition* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1980, 1995) 237. Zinn notes that Cooke was a "banker who during the war had made \$3 million a year in commissions alone for selling government bonds" and that the closure of Cooke's bank "started the wave of panic" (237).

³ Loving 6. Loving notes that "by the Civil War, this Indian nation had largely disappeared from the island, and, indeed, from most of the East as a result of the American Policy of Removal" (6).

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